A HISTORY OF THE TUMBUKA

FROM 1400 TO 1900

THE TUMBUKA UNDER THE M'NYANJAGHA, CHEWA, BALOWOKA, SENGA AND NGONI CHIEFS

Yizenge A.Chondoka
Frackson F. Bota

A HISTORY OF THE TUMBUKA FROM 1400 TO 1900

A HISTORY OF THE TUMBUKA FROM 1400 TO 1900

The Tumbuka under the M'nyanjagha and the Chewa, Balowoka, Senga and Ngoni Chiefs

Yizenge Chondoka and Frackson F. Bota

Copyright © 2015 by Yizenge Chondoka and Frackson F. Bota.

Library of Congress Control Number: 2015904051
ISBN: Hardcover 978-1-4990-9626-2
Softcover 978-1-4990-9627-9
eBook 978-1-4990-9628-6

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the copyright owner.

Maps by Alice Nguluwe and Joseph Chalila, Geography Department, University of Zambia, Lusaka. Other illustrations by Jodi Chondoka and Temwani Bota.

Any people depicted in stock imagery provided by Thinkstock are models, and such images are being used for illustrative purposes only.
Certain stock imagery © Thinkstock.

Rev. date: 10/21/2015

Xlibris
800-056-3182
www.Xlibrispublishing.co.uk
636198

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements ix

Illustrations xi

List Of Chi-Tumbuka Names Of The Months xv

Chi-Tumbuka Words And Names With Similar Meanings
In Selected Neighbouring Languages xvii

A Note On The Tumbuka Names And Surnames xix

Tumbuka History Timeline xxvi

Methodology And Sources xxviii

Introduction xxx

1. Historiography Of The Tumbuka 1

2. Origins Of The Tumbuka 14

3. The Tumbuka Kingdom 28

4. The Rise And Growth Of The Tumbuka Kingdom 96

5. Economy And Society Before 1900 99

6. Marriages Among The Tumbuka 120

7. Other Traditional Practices 153

8. Diseases And Dances Of The Spiritually Possessed 178

9. Funeral, Burial, And Cleansing Practices 186

10. Religion: Kavuba And Spirit Spit-Praying 193

11. Slavery And Slave Trade 197

12. Arrival Of The Southern Neighbours: The Chewa 206

13. Arrival Of The Traders From The East: The Balowoka 210

14. Arrival Of The Newcomers From The North-West And The West: The Senga 236

15. Arrival Of The Newcomers From The South: The Ngoni 255

16. The Decline Of The Tumbuka Kingdom 271

17. The Arrival Of The British Missionaries And The British Government In The Tumbuka Kingdom 273

Bibliography 275

Index 281

This book is dedicated to our two families, the Chondoka and Bota families. For the Chondoka family, the book is dedicated to the wife Chapasi Justina Ngoyi Chondoka, and the children: Jodi, Yizenge, Thokozile, Chomola, and Chapasi. For the Bota family, the book is dedicated to the wife, Fostina Nyimbiri Bota, and the children: Lusungu Sekelani, Beyani, and Temwani.

The book is also dedicated to all Tumbuka and Tumbuka-speaking people wherever they are, and to all our respondents in the field.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people provided support during the preparation of this book. They were too many and not all of them can be listed here. But we sincerely say thank you very much for your great support, whatever form it was.

We wish to register our heartfelt thanks to Professor Ackson Kanduza of the Department of History, University of Swaziland for his constructive comments on the draft manuscript. We also thank Professor Owen Kalinga of the University of North Carolina in the United States of America. He provided frank and penetrating constructive criticism on the draft manuscript. We benefited a lot from his timely advice and incorporated most of his suggestions.

This is a *second edition*. Some corrections to the first edition have been made based on comments that individuals sent to the authors. In connection to this, we sincerely thank Mr E. Lithuli Chipeta-Mpeta of Mzimba, Malawi, for his very important criticism of some points in the first edition. His comments were taken into consideration, and the appropriate revisions have appeared in the appropriate pages in this edition.

Since this is the first book on the Tumbuka, we expect some mistakes in the explanation of some issues in the book. We encourage individuals who have spotted some mistakes in this edition to send them to the authors on: PO Box 30290, Lusaka, Zambia. With your comments, we will prepare a better book on the history of the

Tumbuka in subsequent editions. However, we take full responsibility for the weaknesses of this book.

We are very grateful for the financial and material support from Catherine Chang, 62 Van Buskule Road, Teaneck, New Jersey, USA and Andrew and Deborah Herold, 11402 Westview CT, Beltsville, Maryland, USA). We also thank Mrs Grace Haluumba Siazilo, Eye Department, Mwami SDA Mission Hospital) and Ms Maureen J. Muzumara (Provincial Medical Office, Chipata) for their excellent secretarial services. We are also thankful to the following for their assistance in various ways: Dr B. Waife, Mrs Ethel Mushimba Mukabila, Mr Eliab Kamajibindu, Mr Enock Chitakwa, Mr Alick John Banda, Ms Mirriam Mumba Chipumbu, Bryford Mtine, and everyone at Mwami SDA Mission Hospital. We are also indebted to Mr Guerren Mulenga (Yuka SDA Mission Hospital) for translating Tumbuka words into Luba and vice versa and to Mr Humphrey Kaira (Munukwa Basic School, Chipata) for his advice on the collected data.

The other people who assisted us, especially in the provision of oral testimonies on the history of the Tumbuka and their neighbours, are listed in the bibliography under Oral Interviews. They included old people interviewed in Lundazi, Chama, and Isoka districts in Zambia and in Rumphi and Mzimba districts in Malawi.

ILLUSTRATIONS

Map 1.	Route of Mudala and his group, which included the Tumbuka, from Luba Kingdom before 1400 AD .	16
Map 2.	The Tumbuka dispersal from Kalonga, 1435.	26
Map 3.	Extent of the initial Tumbuka Kingdom under M'nyanjagha Longwe between 1460 and 1490.	52
Map 4.	Tumbuka chiefdoms before 1520.	55
Map 5.	Tumbuka Kingdom at its greatest extent, 1520.	61
Map 6.	European explorers in the Tumbuka Kingdom by 1834.	101
Map 7.	Nineteenth-century trade routes in the Tumbuka Kingdom.	119
Map 8.	The arrival of the Bisa and Chewa in the Tumbuka Kingdom.	205
Map 9.	The arrival of the Balowoka in the Tumbuka Kingdom.	214
Map 10.	Arrival of the Bisa in Chamanyavyose's chiefdom.	235
Map 11.	Senga chiefdom divisions by 1938.	250
Map 12.	Current Senga chiefdoms created after 1945.	252

Map 13.	The arrival of the Ngoni in the Tumbuka Kingdom.	258
Map 14.	Current chiefdoms in the former Tumbuka Kingdom, 2006.	264
Map 15.	Languages in the former Tumbuka Kingdom, 1966.	270

Figure 1.	Tumbuka ethnic tree (chart).	34
Figure 2.	Tumbuka ethnic tree (chart).	35
Figure 3.	Stalin Bota, Chief of Chiefs or Themba Lama Themba M'nyanjagha.	30
Figure 4.	Oliver Bota, Nyanjagha Mutuba, Kapemba Moto mu Musenga.	44
Figure 5.	Lifted Bota, Nyanjagha Mugwera, Kapemba Moto mu Musenga.	45
Figure 6.	*Mata pa jani*.	47
Figure 7.	Patson Nthara, Village Headman Kaluka; Mutankwa Kumwenda, Group Village Headman Wato; Lyson Bota, Acting Chief Chiti.	58
Figure 8.	Maxon Nyondo Bota, Headman Luvwanga in Chief Chiti; Robert Chilembo, Mutunga Village, Chiyunga, Chief Kambombo; and Last Bota, Kabeya Village, Chiyunga, Chief Kambombo.	62
Figure 9.	Rev. Tennyson Mkandawire, Mpherembe, Mzimba, Malawi; Paul Nkholongo, a Sukuma from central Tanzania, at Mwami SDA Hospital in Chipata, Zambia; and Stanford Chirwa, Mukopela Village, Chief Zumwanda, Zambia, in 2000.	65
Figure 10.	Nyanjagha Zacharia Bota, the current Headman Chama, Chief Kambombo.	68

Figure 11. Glory Matutu Nyirenda, Group Village Headman, Chief Mowa. 80

Figure 12. Chief Muyombe with his wife during the 1998 Vinkhakanimba ceremony. 85

Figure 13. Nelson Chizamuluwa Bota, Nyanjagha Mufipa Katongomala pa Katungambizi. 86

Figure 14. A *Gongwe*. 103

Figure 15. Traditional furnace (*ng'anjo*). 108

Figure 16. The *mphopo* and *vijele*. 109

Figure 17. Salt-making in Luapula Province, Zambia. 113

Figure 18. Marriage panel in session. 124

Figure 19. Marriage confirmation time. 128

Figure 20. Marriage: wife and husband at the final advice-giving ceremony. 131

Figure 21. A *vimbuza* dancer. 183

Figure 22. Slaves on their way to the East African coast to be sold. 200

Figure 23. Slaves on their way to the East African coast to be sold. 201

Figure 24. A Ngoni with bored ears. 268

Table 1: Regional and Long-Distance Trade Pattern in the Tumbuka Kingdom up to 1900 117

LIST OF CHI-TUMBUKA NAMES OF THE MONTHS

ENGLISH	CHI-TUMBUKA
January	Matika
February	Muswela
March	Nyakanyaka
April	Masika
May	Vuna
June	Zizima
July	Mpepo
August	Mpupulu
September	Lupya
October	Zimya
November	Thukila
December	Vula

CHI-TUMBUKA WORDS AND NAMES WITH SIMILAR MEANINGS IN SELECTED NEIGHBOURING LANGUAGES

English	**Chi-Luba (Luba Kingdom, DRC)**	**Chi-Gogo (Central Tanzania)**	**Chi-Tumbuka**	**Chi-Lambya**	**Chi-Nkonde**	**Chi-Nyakyusa**
Bless	Kubenesha	Lugutize	Tumbika	Unyavwe	Ukupala	Ukusuma
Pig	Ngulube	Ngubi	Ngulube	Inguluwe	Kapoli	Ingulube
Cow	Ng'ombe	Ng'ombe	Ng'ombe	Ing'ombe	Ng'ombe	Ing'ombe
Eye	Disu	Liso/Meso	Jiso/Meso	Amaso	Ilinso	Iliso
Small	Kakese	Ndodo	Kachoko	Akamandi	Akanono	Akanande
Old Person	Mukulumpwe/ Nkambwa	Mukombi	Mudala/Gogo/ Sekulu	Umutu Usongo	Umukombe	Unkusi
Big	Tshinene	Iwaha	Chikulu	Ichikulu	Chikulu	Ikinywamu
Rain	Mvula	Mvula	Vula	Hivula	Invula	Ifula
Life	Moyi	Wumi	Moyo	Hukwangala	Umi	
Moving /Walking	Kunzunguluka	Jemda	Kwenda	Ukwenda	Ukupita	
Wearing Clothes	Kulwata	Kuvwala	Kuvwala	Ukuvwala	Kuzwala	Ukufuala
Down	Panshi	Hasi	Pasi	Paasi	Pansi	Pasi
Cooking	Kuipika/Kuteka	Teleka	Kuphika	Ukupia	Ukweleka	Ukupija
Person	Muntu	Munhu	Muntu	Mwenee	Muntu	Umundu
Mother	Mamu	Yaya	Mama	Umama	Ya mayo	Mama

Ten (10)	Dikumi	Ikumi	Khumi		Ikumi	
Lake	Musulu/Dijiba	Ilamba	Chiziba		Uluzi	Ikisiba
Leader	Mulombodi	Chilongozi	Mulongozi	Husongo	Intinguluzi	Umlongosi
Drum	Ng'oma	Mg'oma	Ng'oma	Ipipa	Ing'oma	Ipipa
Bird	Nyunyi	Ndeje	Chiyuni	Hakayuni	Ichuni	Injuni
Buttocks	Mataku/Matako	Madako	Matako		Intungu	
Mushroom	Bowa	Woga	Wowa/Bowa	Huwoga	Uwowa	Ubonga
Clouds	Mabuba/ Mavubavuba	Mavunde	Mabingu/Matutu	Hamawinga	Amawingo	
Up	Muulu	Kuchanhya	Kuchanya	Ukwima	Papela	Panwanya
Three (3)	Isatu/Disutu	Idatu	Itatu/Tatu		Vitatu	
Head	Mutu	Mutwe	Mutu	Umutu	Impumi	Untuu
Praise	Kutumbisha	Lukumyo	Tumbika	Umutenho	Ukumutasha	
Cross (to Cross)	Kusambuka	Puluta	Kwambuka /Kudumula	Hukudumusyanya	Ukulamba	Ukukinda
Speed	Lubilo	Lubilo	Lubilo			
Firewood	Nkuni	Nkhuni	Nkhuni			
Frog	Kyula	Cule	Cule			
Animal	Nyema		Nyama/Chikoko			
Sun	Djuba		Zuba			
Eland	Nsefu		Nsefu			

A NOTE ON THE TUMBUKA NAMES AND SURNAMES

The Tumbuka surnames that were given to the children and grandchildren of Mulonga Mbulalubilo and his followers were first started as ordinary names or indeed as nicknames. Later such names became permanent surnames or clan names. They were given to them for specific reasons or as a result of specific events that took place at some point in the family or clan history. The names could also have meant specific things or were given in memory of specific items of importance in the area, family, or something that their parents did in society.

Please note that it is not possible to discuss *all original* Tumbuka clan names here.[1] We provide only a few examples of how the names have changed drastically with the passage of time. It will be a worthwhile exercise for the majority of the Tumbuka families whose clan names are not covered here to undertake short researches on their family names. Send such histories of family names to the publishers, whose address is shown on the inside front cover of this book. The authors will include them in the revised edition of this book.

---

[1] For details on original Tumbuka clan names, read Young, *Notes on the History of the Tumbuka–Kamanga Peoples in the Northern Province of Nyasaland*, *passim*.

Some people's names broke-off from the main original name for one reason or the other. Examples of such names include Nyanjagha Botawota (Bota), Mutumbuka, Katyetye (Katete), Longwe, Kasalu (Salu), and Nyirongo. These names came from the name M'nyanjagha, the title for the king of the Tumbuka. This means that these names are all associated with the Tumbuka royalty.

However, the clan name Dokowe came from the original clan name Nyirongo. The story is that Nyirongo had more than one wife. With his first wife, he had only one child, a son. When the son grew up, he called himself Dokowe after a bird. There is a bird called *dokowe*, and this bird only hatches one egg and hence only has one chick at a time. This is why he called himself Dokowe, he was the only child like that of the bird dokowe.

The Lwenje clan also comes from the Dokowe clan. As the clan expanded, new names came into the scene, making people today think that they are of different clans when, in fact, they are from the same original clan. The Nyirongo clan is associated with the Tumbuka royalty. The Mujumila clan found in Lundazi District also broke off from the Nyirongo clan.

The Mkandabile or Kandabile clans were also known as Chenda because of their movements as traders from one place to another. They were also quite rich and for this reason, they were also known by their nickname, Mkanda pa Chuma, 'those who step on wealth'. Their praise went like this: 'Mukanda pa Chuma pasi pakulenga mutika. Mutika munyanyeela musonga wa chela Yavundika wakavundika Nyama wakayola Chilungo.'[2] Translated as: Those who step on metal [wealth], not on the soil that is wet. The soft tip of the iron metal, the one who hides, hides meat that became rotten, and he collected the fermented millet.

---

[2] Note that it is extremely difficult to translate Tumbuka poetic praises into English. This is because many Tumbuka expressions, words, and phrases have no English equivalent. What is provided here and elsewhere in this book is the closest meaning we could come up with. You will find many poetic phrases as you read on.

The Lupwayi (bush crusher) clan was originally part of the Mkandabile clan, but it broke off for unspecified reasons and began its own. The Luhanga clan was also known as the Mutimbula clan. It was known as Mutimbula because, for unknown reasons, the people in this clan liked to make the river or stream dirty by throwing soil and other muddy materials in the water and stirring it, especially at the source of the river, and hence making the water down the river dirty. The people used to say, 'Mutimbula, [the one who stirs water] makes water dirty.'

The Nyirenda clan was named that way because their clan's population increased uncontrollably. They were so many that people used to comment that they were as many as the legs of the millipedes. The same people were also known as Kaunga because they liked to exchange through the barter system their hoes with grain (mainly millet) and grain meal (*unga*) from their neighbours.

The Zimba clan was known as Magaba (the divider of things, especially land) because they helped people share or divide land equally and made strong visible boundaries to avoid future boundary disputes. They praised themselves like this: 'Ise ba Zimba magaba chalo nga nchabanyawo, mulya nkhonye zibisi, Kambulunje wa mu Muchenje. Kayuni ka pa makama kambula kayola bana kayowa, vimayi vyapafunga, chalo mbantu ku khwengwenela chalo. Nkhulozga makuni vyakulya nthakuvindila lusala mwati muvindilenku lusala lukulu waka, Mazimba kupa.' This is translated as: We of the Zimba clan, the dividers of [or those who apportion] land, as if it is for others, the eaters of raw snails, no hope in a Muchenje tree. The bird in the coconut tree does not gather the young ones, knife of common land is people rubbing their buttocks on the ground (land). The one who cuts trees anyhow, it is food, you can stop diarrhoea, you think you can just stop a heavy diarrhoea of the Zimba clan anyhow.

The Kumwenda clan was known as Daile (the one who dwells in the thicket) and used to praise themselves like this: 'Kumwenda Daile, musopa kungui akenda kenda, zubalikanjila ukamuwezga ni usiku akawela bantu bakajuma bakati, "Yebo Musopa Daile."' This is translated as: Kumwenda, the one who dwells in the thicket, the worshipper of a hiding place, he wandered all over until the sun set

and darkness forced him to come back home. On arrival, people approved and said, "Thank you, the thicket worshipper."'

The Nyimbili clan was known as Bakubona, and they believed that when they were coming from the Luba Kingdom, their subdivision was known as Bukubona. They broke off from the main group and settled at the mountain with the same name which is also the name of their clan, Kubona. The mountain and thicket are found at Jombo area in Muyombe, Isoka District. This is the village for the Nyimbili. The other villages in the same area are Kapalakaska, Kamilang'ombe, and Mulowe. Their original chief was Chikontha of the larger Chamanyavyose's chiefdom. But later on, the chiefdom became part of Muyombe's chieftaincy. The original subchieftaincy was in the north-west part of the chiefdom of Chamanyavyose. Bakubona or Banyimbili praised themselves as follows: 'Ise bakubona windawinda kasumpa ka malenje nkalamu zulila zili pa nyama ya nkoza, bakabisa pamatenda, panyifwa bakavumbula Bakubona.' Translated as: we are those that are found at Kubona mountain, moving waves like a cap [crown] made from elephant reeds, roaring lion on a Kudu's meat. They hid the sickness, but when death occurred, the Bakubona revealed.

As for Mughandila or Muwandila *mukwenda* (Mwandila clan), the oral traditions say that this name was given to the person because he was ashamed or too shy to eat *sima* (staple food of the Tumbuka) left overnight (*chimbala*) in the presence of people. It is said that he kept his leftover sima in his fibre bag (*nkwizu* or *nyanda*). However, he did not eat it because he was shy to eat it in front of other people. This is why people said he was 'Muwandila Mukwenda Chimbala Chili muthumba.' This is translated as: becoming emaciated while the leftover food is in his bag. The member of the clan was getting thin for lack of food, yet the person had food left overnight which he did not eat because he was shy or ashamed of it. This clan was later called the Muwandila or Mwandila clan.

The Mfune (Mwanjakwa or Njakwa clan) were together with Mutimbula and Nyanjagha Botawota. The Mfune or Bamfune named the mountain near their locality as Njakwa, and they were also known

as the owners of the mountain Njakwa, hence their other name, Mwanjakwa. The Botawota and other Tumbuka clans left the Mfune clan at Njakwa because they said that they (the Mfune) were at night turning into water in which or where there was a man-eating monster. The Chondoka clan is also from the Mfune clan. They were originally Mfune, but after leaving Njakwa, they built a village they named Chondoka. Those who left this village for other areas were correctly known as people from Chondoka Village. However, their clan name, Mfune, gradually disappeared. Later, people thought that Chondoka was the clan name. Fortunately, elders in the Chondoka families still know that their clan name is Mfune and that they are part of the large Mfune clan.

The Banthali (Munthali) clan is believed to have come about due to intermarriages between the Tumbuka and the Ndali of Tanzania. They broke off from the Mwakyusa. The Banthali and the Mfune are commonly known as the Henga, a small segment of the Tumbuka. The reasons for calling them the Henga are given elsewhere in this book.

The story of the Kanyinji or Kayala clan (also from the famous Dokowe clan) is that when they left Mount Hora (Hola), they planted pumpkins, and that is why they are sometimes called Matanje (pumpkins) instead of Kanyinji. Mbibe Kanyinji was the most senior, then came Wayihola (Nkulande), and the last in seniority was Kaponthoka. The Kanyinji praised themselves in the following way: 'Kayala musasamuka nthembe yachuma yajungu bakopanga kusweka bakatemwanga kusama nyengo yamise.' This is translated as: Kayala, the gourd, container for our wealth. They feared it would break; hence they liked shifting from one place to the other in the afternoons (or evenings).

Some *common* surnames of the Kalonga wa Songwe and Kalonga wa Nkhonde grandchildren include the following: Muhango (Mhango), Kachali (Kachale), Khunga, Chilembo, Nkhonjela (Khonje), Mututa (Mtuta), Chihana, Chinula, Chavula, Chondoka, Musiska (Msiska), Chipeta (Mpeta), Mutika, Utheka, Chawula, Kandinda (Vwemu), Mazunda (Zunda), Musangu, Mtonga, Kaleya, Musowoya,

Khondowe, Kaleya, Musimuko (Msimuko or Mazibuko), Museteka (Mseteka), Muteuka (also from the Mkandabile clan), Muhone (Mhone), Hara (also known as Shumba), Mbale, Ngwira, and some other names in the Mulonga Mbulalubilo family tree. It is not possible to list all common names of the Tumbuka.

Some people bearing the names above seem to have come from the south with the Ngoni, and some of the same people seem to have come from the north. For example, some of the Mpeta seem to have come to Mabili with the Zwangendaba Ngoni, and some of them seem to have come from Usukuma in the north with M'mbelwa. The same name is also found among the Ndebele in Zimbabwe. This means that some of the Mpetas are Ngoni while others are not. The same is true for the Msimukos. The name Msimuko is also known as Mazibuko, a Ngoni praise. If it is a Ngoni praise, it means most of the Msimukos are Ngoni, while others are Tumbuka.[3]

More research into the Ngoni and non-Ngoni names in the Tumbuka Kingdom is urgently needed by students of history and languages in universities in Malawi and Zambia. For more details, see the Mulonga Mbulalubilo (or Tumbuka ethnic) family trees in figures 1 and 2.

However, because of thousands of intermarriages over many centuries with millions of neighbours (especially with the Senga, Bemba, Namwanga, and other ethnic groups in the north and north-west of the kingdom; with the Balowoka, Mwakyusa, and other ethnic groups in the north of the kingdom; and with the Lakeshore Tonga, Chewa, and Ngoni), the Tumbuka clans have over the centuries created new clans that have included clans from these neighbouring ethnic groups. The clans so created through intermarriages are or have become in all aspects *genuine* Tumbuka clans and are therefore part of the large Tumbuka society.

---

[3] The authors are grateful to Mr E. Lithuli Chipeta-Mpeta of MMI in Mzimba, Malawi, for his positive comments on our earlier discussion in the first edition on the issue of surnames of the Kalonga wa Songwe and Kalonga wa Nkhonde.

Historically, the Tumbuka can therefore conveniently be subdivided into two groups: the Tumbuka Luba, the original group from Luba Kingdom, and the Tumbuka who emerged through intermarriages with non-Tumbuka neighbours. The neighbours came to settle in the Tumbuka territory long after the Tumbuka formed their kingdom. These are Tumbuka Chewa, Tumbuka Senga, Tumbuka Mlowoka, and Tumbuka Ngoni. The divisions mentioned here are for their *historical origins only*. In reality and culturally, as noted above, they are all Tumbuka. There are also many smaller subsidiary Tumbuka groups by origin found mainly in the north-western corner of their original kingdom between Kalonga and Isoka. Many of these belong to the Kalonga wa Nkhonde segment of the Mulonga Mbulalubilo Tumbuka. More details on them are found in the later chapters.

Another point to mention about the Tumbuka surnames is that normally, for the female gender, there is a prefix, *nya*, added to denote a woman, while the surname for the male gender does not change. For example, you will find Wajisunzga *Nya*chilembo, a woman, and Fumbamtima Chilembo, a man, in the same family or Thokozile *Nya*chondoka, a woman, and Fundoziwemi Chondoka, a man, in the same family.

TUMBUKA HISTORY TIMELINE

Before AD 1400	The Tumbuka, in a group with others, left Luba Kingdom. The group was under Mudala. The Tumbuka segment was under Mulonga Mbulalubilo.
1410	The group's leader, Mudala, died in an area south of Tanzania that borders Zambia.
Before 1415	The group split after the death of Mudala.
1415	The Tumbuka segment of the group under Mulonga Mbulalubilo went to Kalonga.
1430	Mulonga Mbulalubilo died at Kalonga.
1435	A large segment of the Tumbuka at Kalonga dispersed.
1450	The Tumbuka settled in many parts west and south of Kalonga and established chiefdoms.
1460	Longwe became the first M'nyanjagha (king) of the Tumbuka in the initial kingdom.
1490	Longwe died of old age.
1500	The Chewa passed through Kalonga.
1520	The Tumbuka Kingdom was at its greatest extent under M'nyanjagha Kazanduka.
1600	The Chewa began expanding into the Tumbuka Kingdom from south of the Bua River.
1750	The Chewa firmly settled in the Tumbuka territory (Mphamba's chiefdom) south of the kingdom.

1770	The Balowoka entered and settled in the Tumbuka Kingdom (Nkhamanga–Lumphi (Rumphi) areas).
1780	The Bisa entered and settled in the Tumbuka Kingdom (Chamanyavyose's (Chama) chiefdom).
1850	The Bemba under Chitimukulu Chepele invaded the northern part of the crumbling Tumbuka Kingdom.
1855	The Ngoni M'mbelwa from Mapupo (Nachipeta in Isoka District) entered and settled in the northern region of the crumbled Tumbuka Kingdom.
1890	The British government entered and colonised the disintegrated Tumbuka Kingdom.

METHODOLOGY AND SOURCES

Before this work, there was no book on the history of the Tumbuka. Their history was in pieces and treated in passing in a number of books. This is a pioneering work on the 'complete' history of the Tumbuka. We relied heavily on the oral sources through in-depth interviews with Tumbuka elders in a number of relevant villages in Zambia and Malawi. The details of the interviewed elders are in the bibliography. We also interviewed non-Tumbuka people who either lived with them or were and still are neighbours of the Tumbuka.

Archival records were also very useful in this study. They provided data that could be cross-checked with some of the details provided orally by various people. As expected, most of the archival records strictly on the Tumbuka were very difficult to find. The Tumbuka were seen through the spectacles of other ethnic groups. We had to search for details about the Tumbuka among the records on other ethnic groups, like the Balowoka, Chewa, Senga, and Ngoni. For example, the early scholars who wrote on the Senga of the present Chama District thought that there were no Tumbuka in that area. They were not aware that the area was first inhabited by the Tumbuka before the Senga, who came from the west and encroached on their territory at the end of the eighteenth century. Consequently, today, the rudimental history of the Senga is what is known to the world. But the Senga are a small proportion compared to the population of the Tumbuka in the district. This issue on the history of the Tumbuka and Senga in Chama District has been clarified in the books by Yizenge Chondoka entitled *History of the Tumbuka and Senga in Chama District: Chiefdoms without a Kingdom, 1470–1900* and *Machona: Returned Labour Migrants and Rural Transformation in Chama District, Northeastern Zambia, 1890–1964*. Both books were published by Academic Press in Lusaka, Zambia, in 2007.

The dates that have been used here are approximate ones based on the data collected from the oral interviews. Concrete dates on the history of the Tumbuka before the intrusion of the Balowoka and

Bisa are difficult to find. This has been made worse by lack of much archaeological excavation in the old Tumbuka Kingdom. Only one archaeological site in Kalonga District in Northern Malawi is known, and that is not sufficient to provide us with all the dates or chronology we need for this study.

The maps and family or clan trees have been *constructed* using mainly oral data from the field and supplemented by data from archival sources.

INTRODUCTION

> But it is not too late and it is to be hoped that the mistaken policy of the old Tumbuka families, who hide their true race [ethnic identity] in the foolish dream of being taken for 'Ngoni', may not long delay the appearance among them of a reliable historian.[4]

The Tumbuka are a district ethnic group in Central Africa found mainly in Zambia and Malawi. This book has explained how the Tumbuka moved from Luba Kingdom in the present Democratic Republic of Congo to where they are now. On the outskirts of their kingdom, their land was encroached on by their neighbours, and this resulted in the creation of mixed cultures in the affected areas. Some people came and settled right in the interior of their kingdom, creating a mixed culture in the affected areas. It is for this reason that now you will find some of the Tumbuka with technically non-Tumbuka names. If you study their family histories, it will be discovered that their origins are from the non-Tumbuka neighbours who came to settle in the Tumbuka territory and eventually intermarried with the Tumbuka. Naturally, they maintained the names that are different from their Tumbuka family names.

The Tumbuka maintain their family names (surnames) at all times. These are the ones that are used to identify their locality in the kingdom or the village where they come from. For example, a Nyirenda, no matter where he or she is residing today, is by origin from north-western Malawi in Mowa's chiefdom. The Kumwenda, wherever they are today, are by origin from Nkhamanga in Northern Malawi, and the Chondoka, wherever they are, are also from the Mfune clan.

The great-grandparents of some of the members of the Mfune clan under Dakamuleke Mfune from a village they named Chondoka in

---

[4] Rev. Thomas Cullen Young, *Notes on the History of the Tumbuka-Kamanga Peoples in the Northern Province of Nyasaland* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1932), p.136.

north-western Malawi in Mowa's chiefdom eventually became known as the Mfune from Chondoka Village. Later on, the name of the village where they came from became their surname: Chondoka. In what later became Chamanyavyose's chiefdom, the Chondoka clan under Dakamuleke Mfune settled in the main village called Kamphele in the present Chama North. From there, they spread to other parts within the current Chama North.

The Khunga clan is originally from Zolokele in north-western Malawi and, like the Chondoka clan, also spread to Chamanyavyose's chiefdom. The Zimba, also known as Magaba, are from Lundazi District. Longwe or Bota (from Longwe Botawota) are royal surnames. These names can be found in many places within the Tumbuka Kingdom. For example, Chamanyavyose Longwe, the leader of the Luangwa Valley Tumbuka chiefdom (Chamanyavyose's chiefdom is named after him) before the Senga encroached on the territory, was the son of Longwe Botawota, the first king of the Tumbuka. All these examples are clear evidence that indeed the Tumbuka lived in clan villages or villages of mixed clans. They see such localities (villages) as their origins within the old Tumbuka Kingdom. The Tumbuka elders can easily identify the origin (village or area) of a Tumbuka individual by his or her surname. This is not the case with some people who settled among the Tumbuka, such as the Senga (Bisa/Biza), the Bemba, and the Chewa.

In the Chi-Tumbuka language, there is *plural of respect*, which is not in the English language. Anyone much older than yourself has to be addressed in the *plural of respect*. You will address him or her as if they are many when in fact it is just one person. For example, one will say *Ba* Chilembo, *Ba* Ngwira, *A* Nyirongo, *A* Kamanga, and so on. The prefix *Ba* or *A* in the example is what creates the *respect* for the person you are addressing by that name. This is what is meant by plural of respect.

In the Tumbuka culture, those classified as children never attended any funerals or burials even if the dead people were of 'blood relationship', including parents. Also, sex before marriage was strictly prohibited, and pregnancy before marriage created serious conflicts

between the two families. It was also for the same reason that on the night before the wedding, the girl was always checked for virginity. At ceremonies, beer was an important item for people to drink and enjoy themselves, accompanied with drumming and dancing. In the Tumbuka language, there were very few *R*s before the arrival of the Ngoni in their kingdom. The Ngoni are the ones that brought the many *R*s into the Tumbuka language. In the west and south of the Tumbuka territory, the language is mixed with small proportions of Bisa and Chewa languages respectively. The same is true for the areas near the Lakeshore Tonga and the northern parts of the kingdom.

Culturally, the Tumbuka today are a mixture of many ethnic groups, the main ones being Chewa, Senga (Bisa), Balowoka, Malawi (Lakeshore) Tonga, Ngoni, Namwanga, Bemba, and other ethnic groups between Isoka District in Northern Zambia and Kalonga District in Northern Malawi. They live together with no known conflicts.

CHAPTER ONE

HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE TUMBUKA

> You cannot twist a history of a people for a long time; one day they will know the truth.

INTRODUCTION

Many years ago, in a Social Science Foundation Course (SSF 110/120) at the University of Zambia, Richard Pinder, an excellent lecturer in the course, said the following paraphrased summary about objectivity in history:

> During the period between 1860 and 1890 the culture and civilization of the American Indian were destroyed . . . and out of that came the great myths of the American West, tales of fur traders, cowboys, harlots, missionaries and homesteaders. Only occasionally was the voice of the Indian heard, and then more often than not, it was recorded by the pen of the white man. The Indian was the dark menace of the myths, and even if he had known how to write in English, where would he have found a printer or a publisher?
>
> This is the problem of history: stories that recount the exploits of certain people make heroes and heroines out of

> them, conveniently ignore the point of view, and perhaps the suffering of other people. Stories of 'good' Americans and 'bad' Indians have their parallels in Africa, where of course the 'goodies' remain the same (the Whites) but the 'baddies' change colour (and become the Blacks). And so history is falsified and becomes the ideology of a dominant or the strong [the ruling class] group.
>
> This is not to say that people consciously lie about what happened in the past. Indeed, if it were a matter of conscious lies the problem would not be so serious: it is much easier to expose lies than to it is to prove that somebody's account distorts what happened. The problem is (to give it a technical name) one of objectivity: if an account is one sided, we may say it lacks objectivity or impartiality.
>
> The lack of objectivity may be expressed in a number of ways. People may leave certain facts out of the analysis. One of the easiest and most common forms this takes is the (necessary) practice of starting an historical analysis at a particular point in time and therefore excluding all that went before. Another common practice is writing the history of a country with reference to the acts of only one of the groups of people making up the country. Histories of America which start with its 'discovery' by Columbus combine both of these faults. Examples are endless.[5]

This is exactly what happened to the histories of many African societies that were written by the Europeans, particularly the missionaries. They wrote African histories with a Euro-centric approach, and up to the early 1960s, it was not uncommon to read works by a number of renowned European scholars who clearly stated that Africa had no history. They stated that this was because

---

[5] Paraphrased from Dee Brown, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee: An Indian History of the American West* (New York: Bantam Books, 1972), pp. xi–xiii, Introduction. This chapter originally appeared as an article in the *Zambia Journal of History*, 1/9 (2004), 72–80. We are thankful to the editors for allowing us to reproduce it here.

Africa had no written history. That was the era when many European scholars did not think that oral traditions were important sources of historical data. They assumed that African peoples could not remember things that happened hundreds of years ago and that they could only remember what happened three to four generations ago. A generation was about twenty years. To the Europeans, the only history Africa had was the history written through the spectacles of the literate white people, especially the missionaries. In almost all cases, such histories were also written through the spectacles of the African rulers, whether genuine or imposed. These were the starting points for lack of objectivity in the histories of Africa written by the European people, especially the precolonial and colonial histories of Africa.

Those who attempted to *write* the history of the Tumbuka did the same: they failed to be objective from two fronts. First, they started their analysis at a particular point in time and therefore excluded all that went before that. Up to now, we do not understand and have no explanations why the missionaries chose the last quarter of the eighteenth century as the starting point for the Tumbuka history. All subsequent scholars more or less followed suit until recently in the 1990s when things began changing. There are questions to ask. First, what did the missionaries think of the Tumbuka history before the late eighteenth century? Did they think that it did not exist? Second, those who attempted to *write* the history of the Tumbuka distorted what really happened in order to satisfy their own interests, and the falsified history, which lacked objectivity, became the ideology of the so-called ruling class in the Tumbuka society.

THE MISSIONARY FACTOR IN THE TUMBUKA HISTORY

As expected, the first written work on the Tumbuka people was by a missionary associated with Livingstonia Mission Station in Northern Malawi. This was Walter Angus Elmslie. His work *Among the Wild Ngoni* was published in Edinburg, Scotland, the headquarters of the

Livingstonia Mission, in 1899.[6] Research for his book must have begun soon after his arrival at Njuyu (old Hoho), a Tumbuka settlement under the Ngoni, in 1884.

This chapter examines the issue of objectivity or impartiality in the history of the Tumbuka historiography. It focuses on three variables, namely, the missionary factor, the Balowoka, and the Ngoni myth. Most of the data Elmslie used when writing his book on the Ngoni and the Tumbuka were material given to him by members of the Chikulamayembe chieftaincy and their supporters. They gave Elmslie false data that glorified Chikulamayembe's past in order to strengthen the chieftaincy's political authority in the area. That was what made the missionaries think that the Chikulamayembe line of chieftaincy was the authentic one, yet it was not.

Chikulamayembe was actually protecting his threatened political position in society. No wonder, therefore, that what Elmslie wrote on the Tumbuka was inaccurate and was a clear reflection of what one would call the 'official' history of the Tumbuka by a reigning non-Tumbuka chief (*by origin*), Chief Chikulamayembe. The chief carefully legitimised his position using false history. In 1902 an article by an anonymous author, entitled 'The Tumbuka Tribe' [ethnic group], appeared in the journal *Aurora*.[7] No reasons were given for hiding the name of the real author of the article. This aside, the major argument in this article is on the Tumbuka unity. The author looks at the Tumbuka people as one united ethnic group and under a very powerful paramount chief, Chikulamayembe.

Indeed, the Tumbuka were and still are a united society, but the unity was not as a result of Chief Chikulamayembe. When the Mlowoka group of traders (later as chiefs) arrived in the Tumbuka Kingdom, they found the kingdom under a strong ruler, M'nyanjagha (the title of the Tumbuka king). They lived peacefully as one ethnic group, traded

---

6 W. A. Elmslie, *Among the Wild Ngoni: Being Some Chapters in the History of the Livingstonia Mission in British Central Africa* (Edinburgh: Oliphant Anderson and Ferrier, 1899). He mentioned the Tumbuka in passing only.

7 Anonymous, 'The Tumbuka Tribe', *Aurora*, 5/1 (1901), 2–3.

with each other, and practised their rich cultures.[8] Through diplomatic manoeuvres, the Mlowoka traders were eventually able to consolidate their rule among the Tumbuka in Nkhamanga. The Tumbuka had existed as a distinct, strong, and united society centuries before the Balowoka entered their kingdom.

Similar distorted sentiments, though this time with more inaccuracies, were expressed by another missionary of the Livingstonia Mission, Donald Fraser, in his book *Winning a Primitive People* published in London in 1914.[9] Like the works of Elmslie and the anonymous author, Fraser wrote a small part on the Tumbuka people based on the information given to him, once more, by *supporters* of the Chikulamayembe chieftaincy.

The first attempt by an indigenous Tumbuka to write a Tumbuka history was by Saulos Nyirenda, one of the pupils of Rev. Thomas Cullen Young at Livingstonia Mission. His article, entitled 'History of the Tumbuka–Henga People', was published in 1930 in the journal *Bantu Studies*,[10] The article was originally written in Chi-Tumbuka, the language of the Tumbuka people. Before it was published, it was edited and translated into English by Rev. T. C. Young. Interestingly enough, this work was published in 1930, three years before Native Authorities were established in Central Africa, including Nyasaland. His work was an excellent glorification and justification of the Chikulamayembe chieftaincy.

The publication of his work in 1930 was also good timing for Nyirenda's (and Young's) intentions. It was at this very time that the British colonial administration was intending to revive a number of chieftaincies in Nyasaland (Malawi), Northern Rhodesia (Zambia),

---

8 All old Tumbuka people interviewed in Malawi and Zambia stressed on this point.

9 Donald Fraser, *Winning a Primitive People: Sixteen Years' Work among the Warlike Tribe of the Ngoni and the Senga and Tumbuka Peoples of Central Africa* (London: Oliphant Anderson and Ferrier, 1914), pp. 112–119.

10 S. Nyirenda, 'History of the Tumbuka–Henga People', *Bantu Studies*, 5/1 (1930).

and Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) in line with Lord Lugard's principles (1922)—the famous indirect rule over the subjects of the British Empire. Information from Nyirenda's article provided the administration with the so-called genuine reasons for reviving the chieftaincy of Chikulamayembe in Lumphi (Rumphi) District. What Nyirenda wrote, especially that he was an indigenous person, removed all doubts about the authenticity of Chikulamayembe's chieftaincy in the Tumbuka territory. To the British administrators in Nyasaland, what Nyirenda wrote was indeed an accurate 'official' history of the 'Tumbuka' *paramount* chief, Chief Chikulamayembe. This information was very useful and actually assisted the colonial government when establishing the Native Authorities in northern Nyasaland.

Perhaps the most influential person on the historiography of the Tumbuka was Rev. T. C. Young, who wrote extensively on the Tumbuka using the official history handed down to him by the Chikulamayembe chieftaincy. His first major work on the Tumbuka was his book published in 1931 entitled *Notes on the Customs and Folk-lore of the Tumbuka–Kamanga Peoples*.[11] His second book and of more relevance to this chapter, *Notes on the History of the Tumbuka–Kamanga Peoples in the Northern Province of Nyasaland,* was published in London in 1932.[12] This was barely two years after he edited Nyirenda's article on the Tumbuka. Rev. Young knew the culture and the language of the people, and as a white missionary among the Tumbuka, he had no problems interviewing the political authorities in the Chikulamayembe chieftaincy, who at that time saw it as an opportunity to falsify the authentic history of the Tumbuka to suit their interests.

After Elmslie's work in 1899, Fraser's work in 1914, Nyirenda's work in 1930, and Young's publications on the Tumbuka in the early 1930s,

---

11 T. Cullen Young, *Notes on the Customs and Folk-lore of the Tumbuka–Kamanga Peoples* (Livingstone: The Mission Press, 1931).

12 T. Cullen Young, *Notes on the History of the Tumbuka–Kamanga Peoples in the Northern Province of Nyasaland* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1932).

not much writing on the Tumbuka was undertaken until after the Second European War in the 1950s. Even that was not purely on the Tumbuka history but a mere discussion of a part of their history in works that were focused on other ethnic groups in northern Nyasaland. Included in this group of authors are famous scholars, like Mary Tew, Monica Wilson, J. G. Pike, and J. Omer-Cooper.[13] Unfortunately, all of them used Young's works uncritically. Thus, they accepted the so-called *official* history of the Tumbuka as handed down from Chief Chikulamayembe to Young.

It is clear from the foregoing paragraphs that early works on the Tumbuka history came from the missionaries of the Livingstonia Mission. What they wrote on the Tumbuka people is what the British colonial administrators took as the authentic history of the Tumbuka. Other scholars also took the missionaries' writing on the same people as the true history of the Tumbuka. The status quo remained unchallenged up to the 1970s. No scholar ever questioned the literature on the history of the Tumbuka.

However, in the 1970s, serious researches on the real history of the Tumbuka were started. The researches have revealed serious weaknesses in the historiography of the Tumbuka history, especially on the early missionary writings. Much academic research on the history of the Tumbuka has been done and is still being continued by a number of academic staff and students in the Department of History at Chancellor College, University of Malawi.[14]

---

[13] Mary Tew, *The Peoples of the Lake Nyasa Region* (London: Longman, 1950); Monica Wilson, *The Peoples of the Nyasa–Tanganyika Corridor* (Cape Town: Longman, 1958); J. Omer-Cooper, *The Zulu Aftermath* (London: Heinemann, 1966). J. G. Pike, *A Political and Economic History* (London: Longman, 1968).

[14] The Department of History at Chancellor College, University of Malawi, Zomba, keeps a number of seminar papers presented by members of staff and students in the department and members of staff from other departments on aspects of the Tumbuka history—for instance, papers by Shadreck Billy Chirembo (BEd IV student), 'Colonialism and Remaking of the Chikulamayembe Dynasty, 1904–1953', History Seminar 1992/93,

However, the main scholar who committed much of his valuable time to undertake serious, extensive, and detailed researches on many aspects of the history of the Tumbuka was Professor H. Leroy Vail. He had, to say the least, single-handedly provided near-accurate history of the Tumbuka people both in Zambia and Malawi. His research findings have also provided much inspiration and encouragement to the lovers of Tumbuka history. This study is an attempt to go beyond what the late Professor Vail did.[15] May his soul rest in peace. Also, may his works on the Tumbuka history inspire more historians to undertake more researches on the history of the Tumbuka.

THE BALOWOKA AND NGONI MYTHS IN THE TUMBUKA HISTORIOGRAPHY

Apart from the missionary factor discussed above, two other events dominate the Tumbuka historiography. These are, first, the coming of the Balowoka ivory traders and, second, the arrival of the Ngoni in northern Nyasaland. Here, again the missionary factor played its role: that of writing documents that strengthened the position of the Mlowoka (Chikulamayembe) chieftaincy, a segment of the Balowoka ivory traders (later as rulers) that settled in specific areas of the Tumbuka Kingdom under the M'nyanjagha.

The Balowoka myth came about as a result of the argument initiated by the early missionary writers of the 'history' of the Tumbuka. The myth states that when the Balowoka ivory traders arrived in the Tumbuka Kingdom, they provided, for the first time in the history of the Tumbuka, political unity among various Tumbuka groups.

---

paper number 4, and by Wadams Kasankha Longwe (fourth year, general degree), 'Impact of Ngoni Raids on the Tonga in the Late Nineteenth Century', History Seminar 1984/85, paper number 10.

15 H. L. Vail, 'Suggestions towards a Reinterpreted Tumbuka History', in Bridglal Pachai (ed.), *The Early History of Malawi* (London: Longman, 1972), pp. 148–167.

There are many implications of this argument. First, it admits the existence of a large kingdom of the Tumbuka prior to the arrival of the Balowoka. This is historically correct. Second, it also accurately admits the unitary origin of the Tumbuka people. Third, the argument implies that before the arrival of the Balowoka traders, there was no political unity among the Tumbuka people in their kingdom.

Also, the argument implies that the arrival of the Balowoka ivory traders in the Tumbuka Kingdom led to the reintroduction, re-establishment, or revival of the previously existing political power in Utumbuka (Tumbuka territory). By implication, it means that soon after the arrival of the Mlowoka (Chikulamayembe) lineage, a segment of the many unrelated Balowoka who entered the kingdom, Mlowoka created within the Utumbuka a Mlowoka (Chikulamayembe) state or kingdom, which they began running until the advent of the Ngoni and later the British colonial administration. This is false and inaccurate.

This version of the Balowoka–Tumbuka history has dominated the Tumbuka historiography for over one hundred years. It is false history based on false assumptions. It is a myth initiated by the Mlowoka (Chikulamayembe) chieftaincy to strengthen and legitimise its political position among the Tumbuka. Unfortunately, this is the history and the historiography that people (including some scholars) have been told and have accepted. It was handed down to the Livingstonia (Mumbwe or Khondowe) missionaries by all the subsequent Chikulamayembe chieftaincies and strongly supported for administrative reasons in 1907 by the British colonial administration in northern Nyasaland.[16]

Indeed, based on the strength of the myth, at one time in the past, there existed a Chikulamayembe Kingdom under the Chikulamayembe lineage that united the Tumbuka people. The

[16] The area where Livingstonia Mission is is locally called Mumbwe. This area is at the top of the table mountain about fifteen kilometres from Lake Malawi. Khondowe is the local name for the settlement at the bottom of the table mountain bordering Lake Malawi. Sometimes these names are interchanged.

British colonial administration quickly supported and strengthened the political power of the chieftaincy of the Chikulamayembe in Lumphi District in 1907.[17] That marked the origin of the Balowoka myth or the myth of the Chikulamayembe State. Evidence from oral traditions of the Tumbuka and all their neighbours confirms the non-existence of such a state or kingdom.

It is called a myth because of a number of reasons. Unlike in the past, when history was written based on false assumptions or falsified data, this time information is based on scientifically researched data. First, the history of the Tumbuka people is indeed a history of a politically unified or united group of people. It is a history of people who lived in relatively medium-sized communities dotted all over their kingdom and are politically united. Field research has clearly revealed, as will be discussed later, that the Tumbuka had a *centralised* system of political administration on the levels similar to those enjoyed by the Chewa, the Bemba, or the Lozi societies. Thus, to talk of historical unity for the Tumbuka is historically accurate. Further, the history of the Tumbuka is in fact a history of many different clans of the Tumbuka people of *unitary origin*.

We can safely and conveniently subdivide the Tumbuka into two *geographical* groups, namely the northern Tumbuka and the southern Tumbuka. Those in the north included the Tumbuka in the current Kalonga, Chitipa, and Rumphi districts in Malawi and in the Chama District in Zambia, while those in the south are found in the present Mzimba (or Kathibi, the original Tumbuka name) Nkhata Bay, and Kasungu districts in Malawi and in Lundazi District in Zambia. All of them were united not only by a central political power but also by certain specific aspects of their culture and language.

---

[17] The whole myth was supported not only by the British administrators in northern Nyasaland for their own interest in the indirect rule policy but was also unfortunately blessed by the newly mission-educated Tumbuka elite and the missionaries of the Livingstonia Mission. For more details on this issue, read S. B. Chirembo, 'Colonialism and the Remaking of the Chikulamayembe Dynasty, 1904–1953', History Department Seminar 1992/93, paper number 4, Chancellor College, University of Malawi.

The Balowoka ivory traders *did not* politically unify the Tumbuka people. They found them already politically united and centralised under the M'nyanjagha (king or paramount chief). Unfortunately, it was the same Balowoka who initiated mechanisms that undermined and eventually fragmented the politically strong Tumbuka Kingdom under the M'nyanjagha (king) and Nyanjaghas (subkings, subchiefs). From the time of the British colonial rule and for administrative convenience, Chikulamayembe was imposed on all the Tumbuka as their 'paramount' chief to the satisfaction of all the Balowoka descendants and supporters but to the intense disappointment of the many Tumbuka.

The last myth in this discussion on the Tumbuka historiography is that of the Ngoni as having destroyed the Mlowoka (Chikulamayembe) chieftaincy and which in turn weakened or destroyed the existing Tumbuka unity. This is another false assumption on the part of the Chikulamayembe chieftaincy. As stated before, there was a strong Tumbuka political unity prior to both the Balowoka and the Ngoni arrivals. Thus, when the Balowoka and Ngoni arrived in Utumbuka, they found them in the same way: politically centralised and united. This is why soon after their arrival, the two groups of intruders and invaders respectively initiated processes that destabilised the Tumbuka Kingdom.

The Tumbuka did not put up any physical resistance to the Balowoka intrusion. However, they put up minimum isolated and uncoordinated resistance to the Ngoni invasion. This was because the Balowoka entered Utumbuka as traders and were quite peaceful people. For the Ngoni, the Tumbuka were unable to resist them because they had inferior weapons and were not experienced fighters. They were unable to defeat and repel the well-known fighters in the subcontinent whose life wholly depended on war and raiding people for food, cattle, and soldiers. The position of the Tumbuka as a peaceful people was demonstrated hundreds of years before the arrival of the Balowoka when they smoothly coexisted with their initial neighbours, the Bakafula (iron ore smelters or the Iron Age people, the Saan) they

found in the area.[18] Although the Ngoni destroyed the Tumbuka Kingdom, administratively they left many native-born Tumbuka headmen and a few indigenous chiefs to continue ruling in their respective areas. As a strategic Ngoni policy, a number of influential Tumbuka chiefs were replaced by Ngoni chiefs. The M'nyanjagha was replaced by a Ngoni king. The senior chiefs were always Ngoni just in case the local people decided to revolt against their rule. Indeed, a few uncoordinated revolts did take place but were swiftly and ruthlessly crushed by the Ngoni impis (soldiers).

Therefore, the Ngoni did not destroy political unity of the Tumbuka as claimed by the Chikulamayembe chieftaincy. What the Ngoni did was reduce the existing political centralisation among the Tumbuka. However, later on, the new and final invaders, the British, used Chikulamayembe to *act* as a symbol of 'political unity' for the Tumbuka in order to administer them on behalf of the British government, consequently reviving the Chikulamayembe chieftaincy in 1907. The British government could have tactfully appointed the indigenous Tumbuka chiefs to do the same. They did this elsewhere in the region, as was the case among the Lakeshore Tonga, the eastern neighbours of the Tumbuka, and among the Chewa, their neighbours to the south.

In conclusion, let us emphasise some points. First, it is true that many ethnic groups have unitary origin. The Tumbuka people are an excellent example. As explained in detail in the next chapter, the Tumbuka came from the Luba portion of the Luba–Lunda Kingdom. They left the kingdom sometime in the fifteenth century. Thus, the Tumbuka history certainly does not begin in the 1780s as claimed by the Livingstonia missionaries, but in the fifteenth century as revealed by Tumbuka oral traditions. It is now an open secret that in Utumbuka the Balowoka or Chikulamayembe chieftain lines and the Ngoni chieftain lines are, *by origin*, non-Tumbuka and not indigenous. The former did not bring political unity among the politically

[18] During field interviews, many Tumbuka elders talked of the Bakafula (the Saan) as being the only people their ancestors found in the area they occupied.

centralised Tumbuka. The Ngoni did not destroy the existing Tumbuka unity as claimed by the Chikulamayembe chieftaincy.

The Tumbuka political unity has never been destroyed to date. On the contrary, the Tumbuka are now contemplating the revival of their lost chieftaincy under the M'nyanjagha. In 1925, for instance, M'nyanjagha Wajontha (Katungambizi II), in the company of Wato and other Tumbuka elders, requested the British government through Meckedie, a government official, to revive the M'nyanjagha chieftaincy that was 'discontinued' by the Ngoni.[19] The request was made at Kataba Pool on the Luwewe River in the presence of many Tumbuka men who were fishing in the area. However, the British government in Nyasaland was not interested in the revival of the Tumbuka chieftaincy. For his utterances on the revival of the chieftaincy, M'nyanjagha Wajontha was fined two shillings and six pence. That was the end of the issue by Wajontha and the Tumbuka. They were too afraid to talk about it any further.[20]

Lastly, it is most unfortunate that the carefully prepared official history of the Mlowoka (Chikulamayembe) written by early missionaries associated with Livingstonia Mission Station and later supported by the British colonial administration had been and continues to be accepted as the standard version of the history of the Tumbuka people. It is this inaccurate interpretation that this work aims to expose and correct. This work is adding new knowledge to the new interpretation of the Tumbuka historiography and opening new debates on this topic. Thanks to the late Professor Leroy Vail who bravely pioneered the new Tumbuka historiography.

---

19 Not much is known about a Mr Meckedie.

20 The revolt against the Ngoni domination organized by Baza Dokowe in 1880 and the demand by Wajontha (also known as Katungambizi II) in 1925 for the British government in Nyasaland to revive the M'nyanjagha chieftaincy are examples of the struggle by the Tumbuka to restore their glorious history, which was usurped by the Chikulamayembe chiefs.

CHAPTER TWO

ORIGINS OF THE TUMBUKA

Our traditions say that Mulonga Mbulalubilo was our first king up to Kalonga.

FROM THE LUBA KINGDOM TO SOUTHERN TANZANIA

Earlier researches on Central African societies have shown that, like many ethnic groups in this region, the Tumbuka were part of the numerous and earliest waves of Bantu immigrants from the Proto-Bantu centre in Kola region in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). They came from the Luba portion, the eastern segment of the Luba–Lunda Empire that once existed there under the leadership of Mwaa Yamvo. According to the latest data from oral interviews in Northern Malawi, particularly in Mzimba and Lumphi districts, and in Lundazi, Chama (Chamanyavyose), and Isoka districts in Zambia, the Tumbuka left the Luba Kingdom in a group with other people.[21] The group comprised the Hehe, the Gogo, Mwakyusa, and the

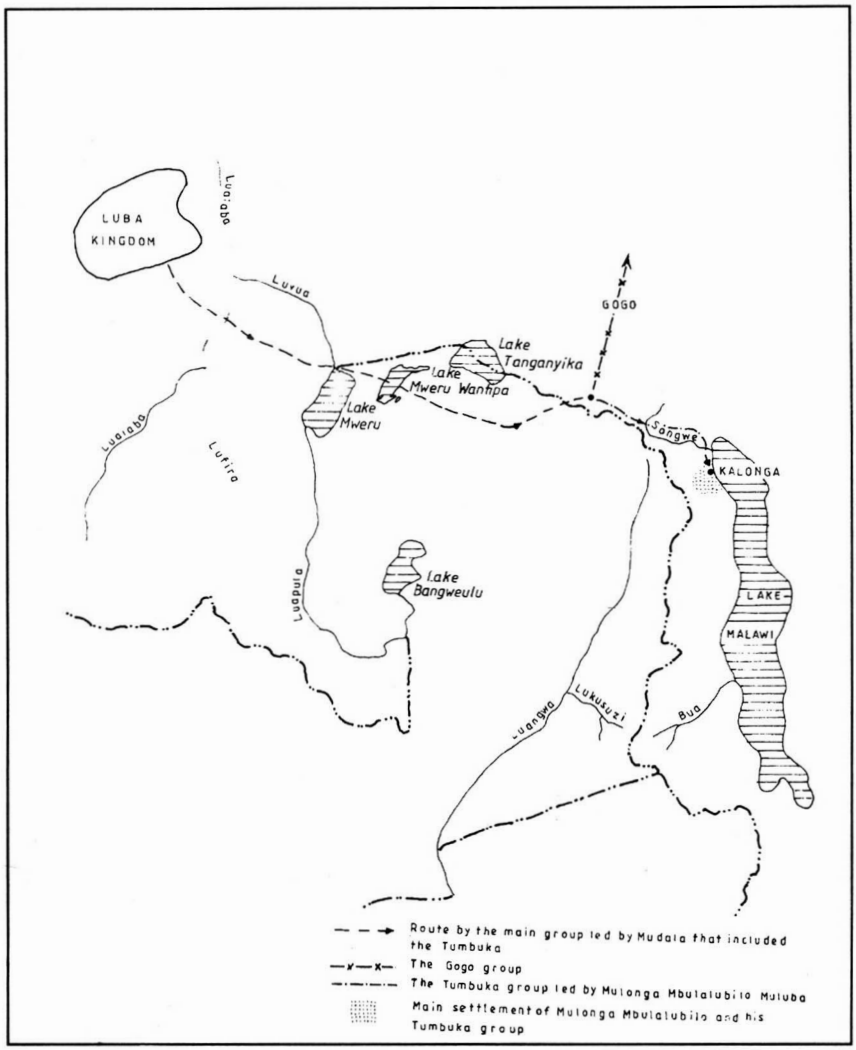
[21] The Tumbuka elders who were useful on the history of the movements of the Tumbuka from Luba Kingdom to Kalonga were Zacharia Bota (eighty-two years old, Chama Village Chief, Kambombo, Chama), who was interviewed on 6 August 1998, and Yafet Zgambo (ninety-four years

Tumbuka themselves. Together, they broke away and took an eastern route. They left the kingdom in the early 1400s, and according to the oral sources and documented evidence, they broke off because they did not like the embarrassing menial work they were subjected to by their leaders.[22] The group crossed Lualaba River, north of Lake Mweru, and passed through the swampy and muddy Lake Mweru-wa-Ntipa. They continued in the eastern direction until they reached a spot in the present southern Tanzania where the Mwakyusa ethnic group lives. See Map 1 for details of the route.

The whole 'mixed group' was led by one *leader* whose title was *mutemi*, 'the one who cuts' (plural, *batemi*). The senior mutemi who led them from Luba Kingdom came from the Gogo portion of the group. His name was Mudala. Thus, each segment of the group had its own junior *leader* (mutemi). The Tumbuka, Hehe, and Mwakyusa sections of the group were

old, House Number 149, near SDA Church, Kabwata, Lusaka, Zambia), who was interviewed on 21 December 2001.

[22] Interviews with Headman Kabanda, Chama Boma, 29 June 1990; Andrew D. Roberts, *History of the Bemba: Political Growth and Change in North-Eastern Zambia before 1900* (London: Longman, 1973), p. 40. This was the same reason for the breakaway of the Bemba, Senga, and Bisa. Also see Young, *History of the Tumbuka–Kamanga Peoples*, p. 160.



Map 1. Route of Mudala and his group that included the Tumbuka from Luba Kingdom early in the 1400s AD

therefore each headed by a junior mutemi.

Mulonga (big river), whose praise name was Mbulalubilo (without speed, moving/walking slowly), from the Tumbuka segment was a junior mutemi and therefore a leader of the Tumbuka group.[23] Mulonga Mbulalubilo was a very courageous leader. He is remembered for being the first one to cross the Lualaba River; after him, the senior mutemi, Mudala, followed. Thereafter, other batemi and the rest of the people crossed the river. Mulonga Mbulalubilo was to the group like the slow-moving river (the Lualaba River) that he crossed first before anyone in the group did. He was mature and did not react on an impulse; he took time to react, and when he did, he did it maturely. That may have been the source and birth of his name. He may have had another name before that, but for now, this is what the oral traditions have revealed to us.

This arrangement of leadership continued up to southern Tanzania, where Mudala died in about 1410.[24]

---

[23] The original family names for the leaders of the subdivisions or the name for the *whole group* are not known. The names we are using are those that were finally known for each subdivision many decades later.

[24] Other notable informants on the history of the Tumbuka movements from the Luba Kingdom to Kalonga include the following: Taida Semeon Luhanga, ninety-two years old, interviewed on 15 August 1998 at M'nyanjagha Village, Chief Mperembe, Malawi; Paul Nkholongo, ninety-three years old, a Sukuma from Mwanza in Tanzania (he lived in Dodoma, the Gogo area, for a long time before coming to Zambia), interviewed at Mwami Hospital, Chief Mpezeni, Chipata, on 20 April 1998; Zacharia Bota, eighty-two years old, interviewed at Chama Village, Chief Kambombo, on 6 August 1998; Maxon Nyongo, seventy-two years old, interviewed at Luvwanga Village, Chiti, Chief Chindi, Malawi, interviewed on 7 August 1998; Robert Chilembo, fifty-seven years old, interviewed at Mutunga Village, Chiyunga, Chief Kambombo, on 21 December 2001; and Yafet Zgambo, ninety-four years old, interviewed at House Number 149, near Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) Church in Kabwata, Lusaka.

FROM THE SPLIT IN SOUTHERN TANZANIA TO KALONGA

The death of Mudala, their overall leader and also a mutemi for the Gogo segment, led to succession disputes and finally to secession. Some people wanted a new leader to come from other sections of the group other than the Gogo section. Others wanted the Gogo section to provide another leader to replace Mudala and continue leading the group. The junior batemi failed to solve the leadership problems. The result was the splitting of the group into three distinct subgroups or ethnic divisions before 1415.

The Gogo and the Hehe ethnic groups decided to go north, and they eventually settled in central Tanzania. Later, they developed into distinct, strong ethnic groups. Their languages are still quite similar to the Tumbuka language. [25]

The Mwakyusa group did not move. They decided to remain where the split took place, in southern Tanzania, and up to now, they are still living there, on both sides of the border between Tanzania and Zambia.

Led by Mulonga Mbulalubilo, the Tumbuka left the place where Mudala died and continued on an eastward journey. On this route, it is said that they travelled for a long time without coming across a perennial river. However, suddenly they saw a small river (stream). In happiness and wonder, they collectively shouted, 'Kalonga, Kalonga!'

---

[25] See Table 1 for Chi-Tumbuka words and names with similar meanings in selected neighbouring languages. Even Paul Nkholongo, cited above in footnote 19, confirmed the striking similarity between the Tumbuka and Gogo languages. Also, Guerren Mulenga, a Luba from the Democratic Republic of Congo, was surprised by the similarities between the Luba and Tumbuka languages. He was interviewed in 1998 at Yuka Hospital, Kalabo, Zambia. Mr Chibanga, a Tanzanian high commissioner official (and a Gogo) in Lusaka also confirmed the similarities between the Tumbuka and Gogo languages. In fact, Chibanga is a Tumbuka name as well. It was for this reason that his Zambian friends teased him of being Zambian (from personal communication with Mr Chibanga in Lusaka).

Small river, small river! The stream or small river they saw and followed up to its mouth, Lake Malawi, was later named Songwe.

At that time, the wife of Mulonga Mbulalubilo gave birth to a baby boy. Being born to a royal family, he was naturally a prince. The boy was named Kalonga wa Songwe after the river. Besides the general meaning of 'small river', the name Kalonga wa Songwe means 'the prince who was born at Songwe River'. The area became known as Kalonga, and the main settlement was also known by the same name. Today, the name Kalonga is still used for the main town and district in Northern Malawi bordering with Tanzania, reminding the Tumbuka and the Nkhonde of their common origin and history.

Mbulalubilo's group arrived in Kalonga in about 1415 and lived there for about twenty years before Mulonga Mbulalubilo died in about 1430. The dates 1415 and 1430 are within the range of the dates provided by archaeological excavations at Mbande Hill in Karonga District in Northern Malawi. The excavations revealed that there were settlements in this area dating back to between 1410 and 1480.[26] The settlements could have been those of the Tumbuka people who settled there in about 1415 led by Mulonga Mbulalubilo.

In fact, when Kyungu (Chungu) arrived at Mbande Hill from the east in Kinga (Bukinga), he found the Nkhonde (Ngonde) people and eventually became their king.[27] According to Wilson, Kyungu told the people he found in the Mbande Hill area, 'You are the priests, you

---

[26] Monica Hunter Wilson, 'Reflection on the Early History of North Malawi', in B. Pachai (ed.), *The Early History of Malawi* (London: Longman, 1972), p. 140. On the same page, she states, 'The earliest occupants [of northern Malawi] were Tumbuka-speakers.' Additionally, in his book *Malawi: The History of the Nation* (London: Longman, 1973), p. 13, B. Pachai states, 'The Ngonde [Nkhonde] must have settled in Songwe area [in Karonga District] around mid-fifteenth century.'

[27] See location of kings (Bukinga) north-east of the mouth of the Songwe River on Lake Malawi in a map on page 43 in Swanzie Agnew and Micheal Stubbs (eds.), *Malawi in Maps* (London: University of London Press, 1972), p. 43.

the indigenous owners of the land . . .'[28] Wilson has revealed to us that when he did field research among the Ngonde, the young men used and spelt the names Kyungu, Ngonde, and Mbande this way, while 'the old men speak of Chungu, *Nkhonde*, Mphande'[29] (emphasis mine). Researches by the two Wilsons (wife and husband) before the Second European (World) War in Ngonde land and the only reliable archaeological date available for this area are strong pieces of evidence to agree or confirm that the people who settled there (Karonga District) in the mid fifteenth century were the Nkhonde. These were the Kalonga wa Nkhonde and Kalonga wa Songwe groups of the Tumbuka under their founder and leader, Mulonga Mbulalubilo.

By the time Mbulalubilo was dying, the whole group was still in Kalonga District. After his death, the Tumbuka did not split due to succession disputes. In the last ten years before Mbulalubilo died, population had grown rapidly, and there was need for some people to leave Kalonga in search of new land for settlement and agricultural purposes. The land shortage was so serious that the search for new land had to take place sooner or later even before the death of Mbulalubilo. However, it seems the death of Mbulalubilo was a catalyst for their dispersal from Kalonga. The migrations of the Tumbuka from Kalonga were in three directions. One subgroup left the area and went into the western direction. Another subgroup left Kalonga, taking a southern direction. The other group went east towards the lake.

Kalonga wa Songwe had his elder brother who had always been known as Kalonga (prince). Oral traditions say that when the elder brother grew up, he married five wives and became commonly known

---

[28] Godfrey Wilson, *The Constitution of the Ngonde (Rhodes–Livingstone Papers, No. 3)* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1939), p. 11.

[29] Wilson, *The Constitution of the Ngonde*, p. 7, footnote 1.

as Kalonga wa Nkhonde[30] (the Kalonga with five wives).[31] That differentiated him from his young brother.

Kalongo wa Nkhonde had many children, and his Tumbuka segment of the Mulonga Mbulalubilo group became very good farmers, growing rice and bananas (later also became known as Nkhonde, named after those who first grew the crop in large quantities). These crops must have come from the interior of present Tanzania. This group eventually began calling themselves children of the Nkhonde. This is how the Nkhonde ethnic division began in Kalonga District in Northern Malawi. Oral traditions say that because this group grew much food, its population increased at a faster rate than that of the Kalonga wa Songwe.

Within a few decades, some people in the Kalonga wa Nkhonde group left to settle on their own in the western territory.[32] According to the oral sources cited above, this group was the first one to leave Kalonga. Eventually, this group settled in small groups scattered in the mountain region between Kalonga and the Isoka–Nakonde corridor. According to Brelsford, this group included the smaller groups of the Tambo, Nyika, Wandya, Wenya, Fungwe, and Lambya. He classified them as 'Tumbuka-Nyanja speaking' and that they were 'in the Tumbuka cluster'.[33] Coxhead described their origin as 'descended from a common stock but have become distinct tribes (ethnic groups) following upon geographical separation in a mountainous country'.[34]

---

30 Additionally, in the Chi-Tumbuka language, the word *nkhonde* is the root word for *five* (5). For example, *banthu ba nkhonde* means 'five people', *ng'ombe zi nkhonde* means 'five cattle', and so on.

31 By origin, the Nkhonde are the same people known today as Ngonde or Nkonde. They may have a different story for their origin. For example, see the story of their origin in the family histories provided by Young, *Notes on the History of the Tumbuka–Kamanga Peoples in the Northern Province of Nysaland*, pp. 56–80.

32

33 W. V. Brelsford, *The Tribes of Zambia* (Lusaka: Government Printer, 1956), p. 90. See Map 16 on the areas where Chi-Tumbuka is still spoken in the former Tumbuka Kingdom.

34 Cited in Brelsford, *The Tribes of Zambia*, p. 90.

The other division of the Mbulalubilo's group went east and settled on the western side of Lake Malawi. This was the Manda group. They were given the name Manda because they liked easting mushrooms by that name. These mushrooms are small, but when they grow, they cover large areas. Those under Kalonga wa Songwe left Kalonga, heading south and south-west.

A significant number of the Tumbuka in the Mbulalubilo group remained at Kalonga, where the chief died. Today, the Tumbuka still constitute a notable proportion of the population in Kalonga District. The group of the Tumbuka that remained at Kalonga is the one that the Chewa found in about 1500. The Chewa arrived in Kalonga, following the route that Mulonga Mbulalubilo's group used. Their overall leader was called Mambo. Their junior leader was also called mutemi. Taking advantage of the death of Mulonga Mbulalubilo, for a short time, the Chewa 'took over' the leadership of whoever was the leader of the Tumbuka that remained at Kalonga. Oral traditions are silent on the one who replaced Mbulalubilo at Kalonga before the dispersal. The Chewa changed the title of their senior leader from Mambo to Karonga (with an *r*).[35] Now *mambo* became a *title* for their junior leaders.

The intermarriages between the newcomers, the Chewa, and the people they found already established at Kalonga, the Tumbuka, and the final merging of the two main ethnic groups and probably other smaller separate ethnic groups within this area created a totally new group, from which the present-day Lakeshore Tonga are descended. Eventually, the Tonga became (and still are) the main neighbours of the Kalonga wa Songwe group. Their names and the language are a

---

[35] *Kalonga* also means 'the one empowered to appoint or nominate'. *Kulonga* means 'to give something to someone'. So this means that he had powers to *longa*—that is, to nominate other chiefs or leaders. That is why the Chewa chief (leader) at that point was known as Karonga. For more details, read Fergus Macpherson, Seminar–Workshop on Oral Records of Local History held at Lundazi, 24–25 June 1972 (Lusaka: Kenneth Kaunda Foundation, 1973), organized by the Department of History, University of Zambia.

mixture of more Chi-Tumbuka than Chi-Chewa, a fact that confirms the short period the Chewa stayed in Kalonga District.

After some decades at Kalonga, the Chewa left the area, going in the southern direction parallel to the lake and settled in the present Central Malawi, where they established a strong Karonga kingdom that bordered the Tumbuka territory to its north. Thus, the Chewa became the southern neighbours of the Tumbuka. They found the Tumbuka *already settled* in the area as far south as Bua River. In fact, by the time the Chewa were settling and creating their kingdom in Central Malawi, the territory from Bua River to Lundazi was already under Chief Mphamba of the Tumbuka Kingdom. Mphamba was a subking or subchief of the M'nyanjagha (title for the king of the Tumbuka). He had a number of Nyanjaghas (title for the Tumbuka subkings or subchiefs), and headmen under his control dotted all over his very large territory up to the border with the Chewa. The Zimba (Magaba) clan of the Tumbuka under Chief Mphamba was the main ruling clan in this area. For details, see maps 4 and 5.

While in Kalonga District and before Mulonga Mbulalubilo died, it was quite common for the group to call itself the Batumbuka kwa Luba group, meaning 'the group that broke off from the Luba Kingdom'. According to the oral tradition, the word *tumbuka* means 'coming out of something, shooting out, being dissected, or being cut off from the main group'. In this context therefore, the word *tumbuka* means 'breaking off from the Luba Kingdom'. Eventually, the Batumbuka Kwa Luba group was simply called the Tumbuka group. This is the origin of the term *tumbuka* for the Tumbuka ethnic group found in Zambia and Malawi today.

As indicated above, from about 1435, a significant section of this group dispersed from Kalonga District and, by mid sixteenth century, covered the whole territory later known as Utumbuka, the land of the Tumbuka.

Before the dispersal of the larger segment of Mbulalubilo's group at Kalonga, the Kalonga wa Songwe's group was under Kalonga wa Songwe himself. Kalonga wa Songwe had two sons—namely, Kayazga (also known as Ntambwe, a name that means 'lion' in the Chi-Luba language) and Malikwata. It is from the two sons of Kalonga wa Songwe that we now trace the *Tumbuka clan tree or the origin and*

the foundation of the subsequent millions of the main Tumbuka clans whose history is the focus of this book.[36] Oral sources on Kalonga wa Nkhonde are available but scanty and uncoordinated.

THE DISPERSAL OF THE TUMBUKA FROM KALONGA

From about 1435, a large number of the Tumbuka under Kalonga wa Songwe and Kalonga wa Nkhonde left Kalonga and went south, south-west, west, east, and north-west. They did so to look for some empty agricultural land as this was becoming increasingly difficult to find at Kalonga at that time because according to the to the informant, the population had increased tremendously.

One of Kalonga wa Songwe's two sons, Kayazga, remained for a few years in the small valleys between the mountains. But after he faced a number of difficulties in growing crops in the small valleys, he moved further south-west and settled in a big valley. The valley had many coconut trees. It was here where Kayazga's only son was born. He declared that all the coconut trees in the valley were for his son and named him Mukamanga, which means 'the owner of the coconut trees'. *Mukama* is a 'coconut tree'. *Nga* refers to 'the owner of the trees or the one who takes care of them'.

The coconut tree valley is between Songwe River and North Rukuru (Lukulu) River, where the Rufilya (Lufilya, also spelt Lufira) River meanders. Later on, the people in this valley were known as the people of the Kumanga (Mukamanga) clan, the clan of Kayazga's only son, Mukamanga. However, Mukamanga had many sons. The only ones remembered by the informants are Nyanjagha Botawota (Bota), the line or clan that later provided kings for the Tumbuka, also known as

---

[36] We had detailed long discussions on Kayazga and Malikwata with many elders, especially with Semeon Chizamusoka Bota (sixty-two years old, Bambanda Village, Chief Kambombo), who was interviewed on 20 November 1999, and Stalin Bota M'nyanjagha, sixty-two years old, who was interviewed at M'nyanjagha Village, Chief Mperembe, Malawi, on 19 December 1996.

Katungambizi I; Kaunga (Munyirenda or Nyirenda); and Mutimbula (commonly known as Luhanga). Mukamanga's group went southward from the original Nkhamanga valley, where the Lufilya River meanders in the present Nkhamanga area.

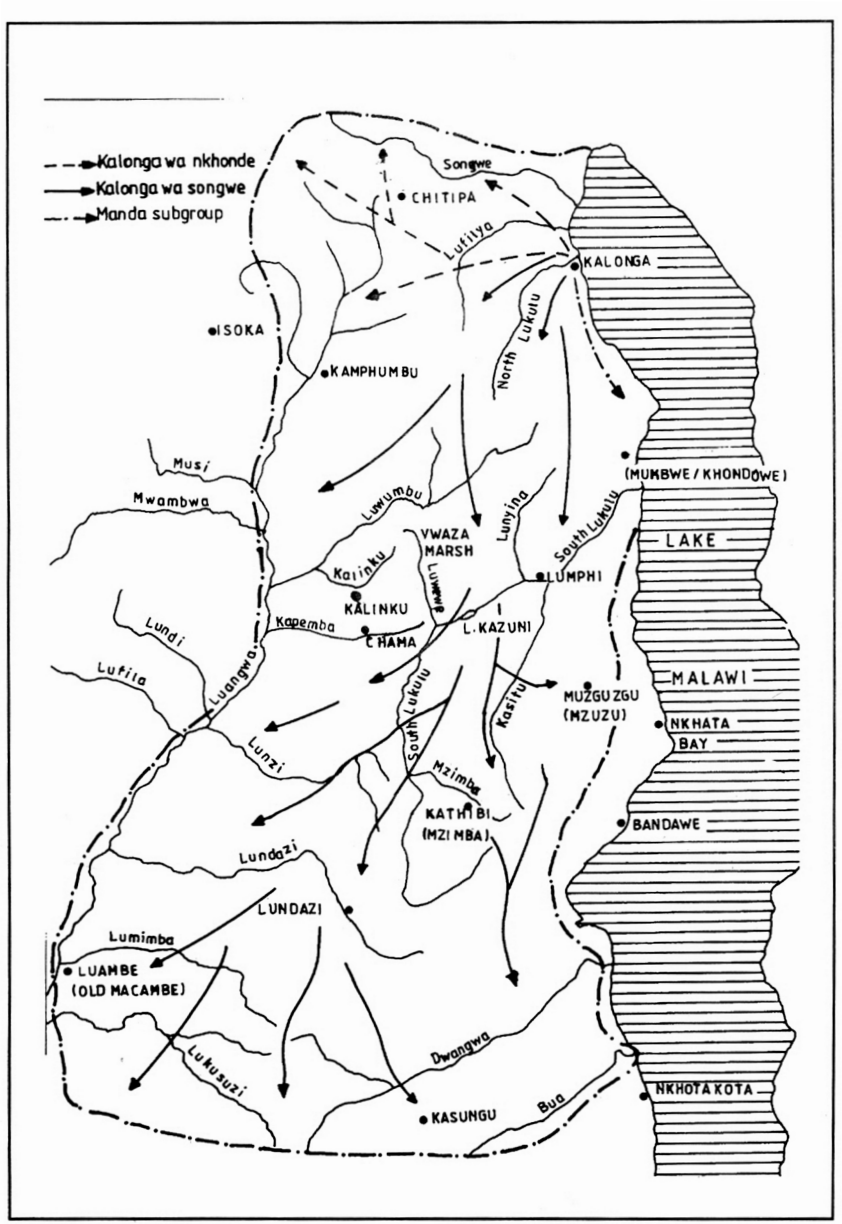
Kayazga's brother Malikwata had two children. Their original names are not known or remembered by the informants but were later known as Mwaphoka and Mwahenga. Mwaphoka was given this name because he liked to grab *ku poka*, the animals (or meat) other people killed in their territories. This name was therefore given to him by other people, those who were victims, mainly the neighbours, the Nkhonde (the Kalonga wa Nkhonde division of the Tumbuka).

The Mwaphoka group settled east and west of Livingstone Mountains (Mumbwe or Khondowe). Mwahenga got his name from the activities of his women. *Mahenga* is 'leftover grain bits after women have pounded grain'. This means that in Mwahenga's area, people were growing a lot of cereal crops, mainly finger millet and rice. This clan settled in three areas—namely, south of Livingstone Mountains in the Henga Valley (plains), Rumphi (Lumphi), and Mzuzu. The area Mzuzu (Muzuzu) was given this name because the territory had plenty of *muzguzgu* trees. So Muzuzu or Mzuzu is a corruption of the original name, Muzguzgu.

Mukamanga was a very good leader who cared for his people very well. He is particularly remembered in the oral traditions for telling his people to enter the caves backwards so as to let their footprints show the enemies that they had just left the caves. This way, they were not easily found or attacked by the enemies. Mukamanga's eldest son was Nyanjagha Botawota (Katungambizi I), who had four children—namely Mutumbuka, Longwe, Kambondoma (also known as Nyirongo), and Mwenera. The first three were sons and the last one a daughter.

Longwe (or Longwe Botawota) was the Tumbuka's first M'nyanjagha (king). Mutumbuka did not follow his brother Longwe and his four wives. Instead, he went and settled among the Mwaphoka (also commonly called Phoka) group of the Tumbuka. Longwe's first wife gave birth to Kazanduka (Ntuntika), who later became the second M'nyanjagha; Mbuluko; and Jalila. The second wife bore him Chite (also known as

Chiti) and his sister, Tafwauli. The third wife bore him Chamanyavyose and his brother, Chizgowi (also spelt or known as Chizowe). The fourth wife did not bear any children because she was barren.



Map 2: The Tumbuka Dispersal from Kalonga, 1435.

Since the area where they originally settled had plenty of coconut trees, all children of Mukamanga—namely, Nyanjagha Botawota, Kaunga, and Mutimbula—were also later called the Bakamanga (or the Kamanga) of the Mukamanga clan. Besides occupying western Lumphi and Nkhamanga, these people also settled in central, northern, and western Kathibi (renamed as Mzimba (body) by the Ngoni)[37] and the present Lundazi and Chama districts in Zambia and also settled in the land south of the present Mphamba's chiefdom up to Bua River in Malawi.[38] One of Kaunga's sons settled at Kapolo; others settled at Muzokoto.

The other children of Kaunga settled at Kawiya, where there were plenty of bamboo trees that they fell in love with. After exhausting the bamboo forest at Kawiya, this group moved to another place with more and better bamboo forests. This was near Kabulunje Mountain and the Dambo marsh that became their main settlement. However, others went further south-west and settled at Tchili (also known as Tchilighilo). Both settlements were under Mowa, the Kadono group of the Nyirenda clan from the Kaunga family line. Each of these chieftaincies is discussed in detail in later chapters.

---

37 The original Tumbuka name for the area known as Mzimba today was Kathibi. The Ngoni renamed it Mzimba (body). They used to say 'Tiyogeza mzimba mumufuleni', which means 'we are going to bathe our bodies in the river'. Eventually, the river and the area were both renamed Mzimba. Gradually, the original name, Kathibi, disappeared.

38 *Nkhamanga* means 'the land of the Bakamanga', 'land of coconut trees', or 'land of the Kamanga of the Tumbuka group from the Bakamanga clan'.

CHAPTER THREE

THE TUMBUKA KINGDOM

M'NYANJAGHA, KING OF THE TUMBUKA

Nyanjagha Botawota, Katungambizi I, was one of the sons of Mukamanga. He was the first one to use or to be given the title or name Nyanjagha. Data from informants revealed that he got this name because he liked to hide (*ku botama/botama*) in small *nyanjagha* trees found in the locality where he lived with his parents. Nyanjagha Botawota (commonly known as Bota) had four children, and one child, Longwe (also known as Longwe I), became the first overall ruler of all the initial Tumbuka chiefdoms in the north that later constituted the early Tumbuka Kingdom.[39] Nyanjagha Botawota was one of the many chiefs in the Tumbuka territory before the kingdom was created, so when his son Longwe became the king, he was called M'nyanjagha, meaning 'the owner of the other Nyanjaghas', the chiefs in the various parts of the kingdom.

[39] Eventually, the name Nyanjagha meant 'chief', and the name M'nyanjagha meant 'king', the overall ruler of the Tumbuka Kingdom. This is why sometimes the Tumbuka Kingdom is also called the M'nyanjagha Kingdom.

The other chiefs, the Nyanjaghas, became his subchiefs or subkings. Each Nyanjagha occupied, defended, and ruled a large piece of the territory in the kingdom. Under each Nyanjagha were traditional leaders, his sub-Nyanjaghas that helped him govern the chiefdom. These were locally called *vilolo* and were also assisted by the senior headmen or group headmen. A group headman in the M'nyanjagha's village was and still is called Kapole. He worked as a senior M'nyanjagha (or state) messenger. Kapole ruled a collection of many villages within the area under the sub-Nyanjaghas.

At all administrative levels, there were councillors or advisers (*yinthini*) to the M'nyanjagha, to the Nyanjagha, to the vilolo, to Kapole, and to the village headmen (*fumu za mu mizi*).[40] Their roles were to provide advice on a number of political, social, economic, and cultural issues to their respective superiors. Village headmen were the grass-roots traditional authorities, each in charge of a village or a few villages. For example, Nyanjagha Chamanyavyose, son of Longwe (the first M'nyanjagha), founded his own large chiefdom in the Luangwa Valley, from Luambe in the south to the present Chikontha and Sitwe in the north of the present Chama District. That was after 1460.

LONGWE, THE FIRST M'NYANJAGHA OF THE TUMBUKA KINGDOM

Longwe had four wives. The first one bore him three sons, namely, Kazanduka, Mbuluko, and Jalila. The second wife bore him a son, Chiti, and a daughter, Tafwauli. The third wife bore him two sons, Chamanyavyose and Chizgowi. As earlier indicated, the fourth wife did not bear him any child because she was barren.[41] Later, two sons

---

40 Technically, the Tumbuka had four types of traditional leaders. These were: village chief (*fumu ya mu muzi*); group village headman (*fumu ya chigaba*), who had a larger collection of villages than the ordinary village chief; and senior or paramount king (*fumu yowusa mafumu yose na malo uwo*).

41 In polygamy, the Tumbuka have special names for the first three wives. The first wife is called *mukolo*, the second wife is called *chizonde*, the

broke off from their father and settled on their own. Chamanyavyose led the breakaway group.

Figure 3: Stalin Bota, Chief of Chiefs or Themba Lama Themba M'nyanjagha

Longwe and Mutimbula left the coconut area together. They crossed the hills and settled at Njakwa Mountains. This was around Bwengo in Kasitu (Kasito) and south Lukulu areas. There, Longwe and Mutimbula found two other groups of the Tumbuka who had settled in this area much earlier. These were the Mwanjakwa (Mfune), Jalavikuba, Mwankhunikila, and Munthali clans. As stated earlier on, the intermarriages between the Tumbuka and the Ndali of southern Tanzania created the Munthali clan.

Mutimbula group did not stay at Njakwa for a long time. Together with his supporters, Mutimbula crossed Lukulu River at its confluence with Lunyina River and landed at a place commonly known as Lumphi Chikwawa in the Bolero area, where they also found plenty of

---

third wife is called *kapeta*, the fourth wife is called *musuniwalya*, and any wife thereafter has no special name.

Mukama or Mikama (coconut trees), the size and quantity equal to the first ones they found and abandoned in Lufilya River valley.

Originally, the headman (village leader) at Chikhwawa was known as Lukhwawa. He was a polio victim, and when praising himself, he said that he was Mukhwabila Mavwalo (crawling with the help of or on his private parts). His real name was Kokwe Mkandabile, the grandson of Mwenera, sister of Mutumbuka, Longwe, and Kambondoma.

Shortly after Mutumbuka left, Longwe, with his family, some Nyanjaghas, and members of the clan, also left Njakwa, leaving Mwanjakwa, Jalavikuba, and Mwankhunikila in that area. He followed Kasitu River and turned westward just before Chibuluntha and crossed Lukulu River and settled on its west, close to Lake Kazuni. Nyanjagha Longwe set up his chiefdom in that area and proved to be a very good leader and, as a result, gained much respect from the other Tumbuka chieftaincies in the territory. He gave advice to other Nyanjaghas on a number of issues, and they frequently visited him to consult on administrative problems they were unable to sort out on their own.

It was for this reason that other Nyanjaghas *voluntarily* decided to *make him* their overall leader; after all, they were all from the same original Tumbuka family of Mukamanga. This is how Longwe became the first M'nyanjagha, the owner (and in charge) of the other Nyanjaghas and the overall ruler of the Tumbuka society in about 1460.[42] Prior to this date, many Tumbuka chiefdoms were already established, but a kingdom was not yet formed. Each chief was politically independent of the other but socially united in times of need. It was the second M'nyanjagha, Kazanduka, whose reign saw the greatest extent of the kingdom.

The traditional praise name for the first and all the subsequent M'nyanjaghas was 'M'nyanjagha Chipirikiti Botawota Mbulalubilo

[42] Read about the theories of state-building, especially the voluntaristic theory of state-building as the Tumbuka did, in Robert L. Carneiro, 'A Theory of the Origin of the State', *Science*, 169 (21 August 1970).

Wambula Kwenda Chiyendeyende', which is translated as 'M'nyanjagha Botawota Mbulalubilo, the one who does not travel aimlessly'. One of Longwe's children, Jalila, the last born from Longwe's first wife (the hedge), had his chiefdom's headquarters at Chanyoli, a place where up to this day there are three Jalila royal burial grounds. Jalila had his chiefdom in the area and was answerable only to his father, Longwe. Jalila was left there as a hedge to prevent enemies from entering M'nyanjagha Kingdom.

Being close to Lake Kazuni, many people were engaged in fishing. Much of the fish from here was dried and sold to the neighbouring communities. Unfortunately, the lake had plenty of crocodiles. Oral traditions state that many people were killed by these reptiles. As a result of this problem, some of the people in the Longwe group abandoned this area and went back eastward up to Kasito River. They followed this river southward up to near Kathibi (Mzimba), where they found Kambondoma of the Nyirongo or the Dokowe clan, another group of the Tumbuka. The remaining Longwe's group also left this place and went further westward then southward to where Chiti settled close to South Lukulu River.

M'nyanjagha Longwe, together with Kazanduka and Mbuluko (also known as Waluzeko) crossed South Lukuru River and settled on the east bank. That became the seat of the kingdom. In about 1490, M'nyanjagha Longwe died of old age, and Kazanduka was installed as the second M'nyanjagha. Among other things, Kazanduka is remembered for his tight control over his subordinates, the Nyanjaghas in the kingdom. The kingdom expanded to its greatest heights during Kazanduka's period.

How did the M'nyanjagha administer his kingdom? All chiefdoms were united by the M'nyanjagha, who enforced the laws and administered the Tumbuka Kingdom. He helped his people in times of crises. He also presided over religious ceremonies and performed at various rituals for the benefit of the people. Generally, M'nyanjagha ruled with the support of his brothers and uncles. In the *matrilineal* Tumbuka society, an uncle (*sibweni*) was very important to a nephew who traditionally was the next heir to the throne.

To assist the king in the management of the kingdom were three committees—namely, the special committee, the administrative committee, and the committee of councillors. The major task of the special committee was to run the affairs of the kingdom during the absence of M'nyanjagha. This could be the time when M'nyanjagha would be away on official visits to various chiefdoms in the kingdom. It could also be the time from the day the reigning king died and before a new one was installed. During the absence of the king, this committee worked to see that things went well in the kingdom. The members in this committee included the prime minister (*kazembe*); Mbuluko, who was commonly known as Kapemba Moto mu Musenga or just Kapemba; Chiti Chambula Bana (Chiti); Kapole, the most senior headman or group headman and the king's messenger; other notables, such as important headmen or senior members of the family in the kingdom, like Makoloti and Wato.

The administrative committee's main duty was to approve and implement or reject the recommendations of the special committee. It also assisted the king in his national administrative assignments. Together with the special committee, they were responsible for the choosing the person to act as king or to be the next M'nyanjagha. The two committees also decided when to bury the dead king after making sure that all the preparations were in order and in line with the traditions and customs of the land governing the burial of the M'nyanjagha. Its members included the kazembe, Kapemba, Katongomala, Jalila Bantu Kwiza (commonly known as Jalila), Chiti, Chiyunga, Chitukula (also known as Chiyunga mu Mapili and commonly known as Chiyunga), Chamanyavyose (commonly known as Chama),[43] and other notables in the kingdom, such as Mugwera, Wombwe, Makoloti, and Wato.

[43] Technically, the present Chama District in the Eastern Province is named after this subking, who is a son of Longwe Botawota, the first M'nyanjagha. Therefore, the district should be called by his full name, Chamanyavyose.

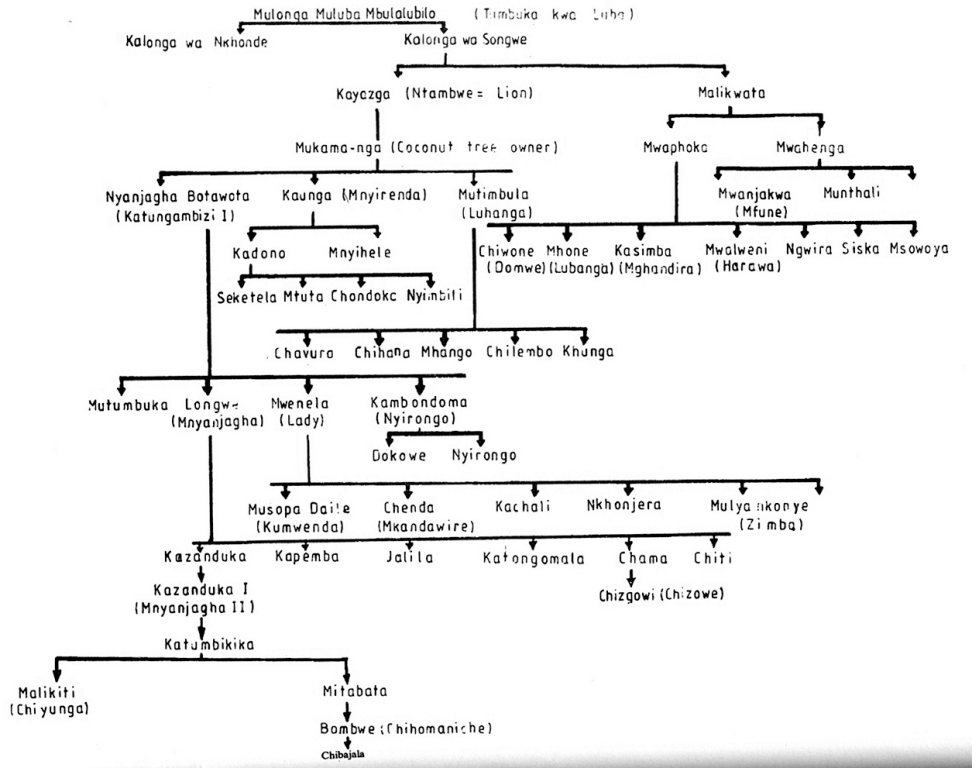


Figure 1: Tumbuka Ethnic Tree (Chart)

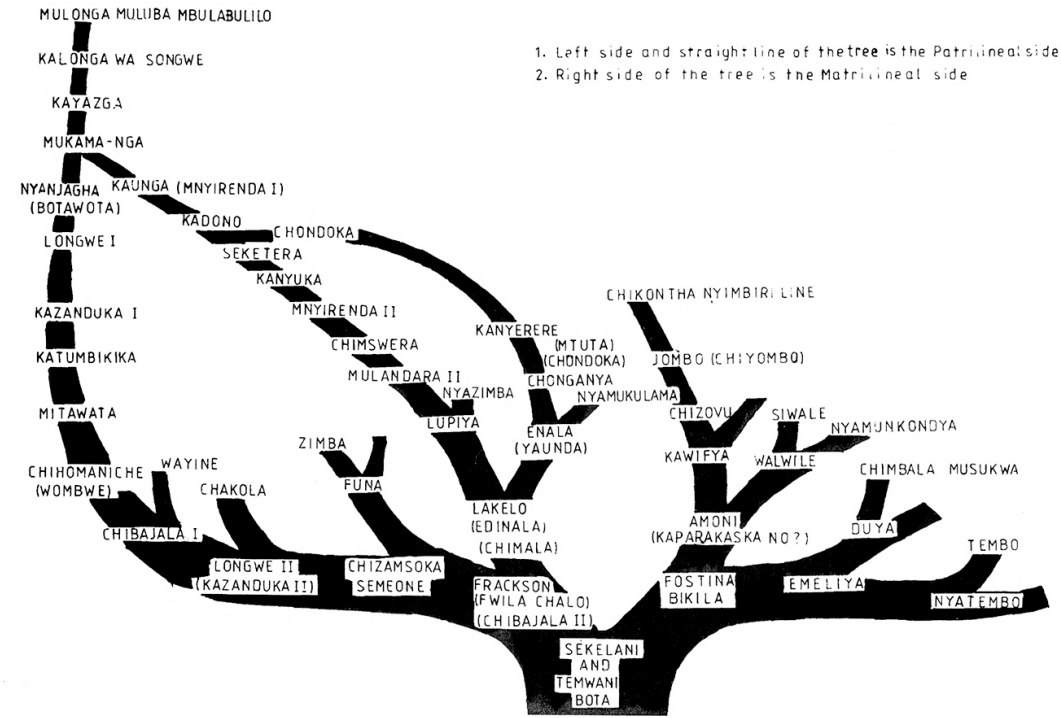


Figure 2: Tumbuka Ethnic Tree (Tree)

The third committee, the committee of councillors, dealt with land, housing, and social services in the kingdom. The members of this committee were Wombwe, group village headmen, headmen, and other notable citizens. The committee focused on four organs—namely, health, agriculture, education, and communication. In the area of health, the herbalists, traditional medical doctors, witch-finders, and birth attendants offered their services to the society. The M'nyanjagha had his own traditional doctor, who treated him any time he fell ill. During the Tumbuka traditional ceremony, the Mabazgo traditional ceremony, experts in the administrative committee reported on population statistics, such as population growth, births, and deaths in the kingdom. The agriculture and education organs dwelt on issues pertaining to traditional education in general and agriculture in particular. Elders in the communities took charge in educating the youths on various issues of the society. The importance of the department of communication cannot be emphasised. Elaborate and efficient systems of communication were developed for easy delivery of information from one village to the other and from the M'nyanjagha to his people in the kingdom. Roads were constructed and maintained by people recruited by the administrative committee. They also developed elaborate communication systems. The most important methods of communication were the use of three different drums, smoke, and a system called *mata pa jani* or *mata pa thepo* (literally meaning 'saliva on the leave'). Using these methods of communication, messages from the king's palace reached all parts of the kingdom very quickly.

Why was it that in this matrilineal society, a number of sons or brothers of the chiefs became chiefs in the early stages of the kingdom? When there were no nephews or grandsons, they used sons or brothers to take over the throne. But gradually, they had enough nephews and grandsons in society to continue with their tradition of a nephew or a grandson taking over the throne when a king, subking, chief, or headman dies. The real Tumbuka knew and still know and have never forgotten that they are a matrilineal society, where a nephew, the child of the reigning king's (or reigning subking's, chief's, or headman's) sister (or the ruler's grandson) becomes the king when the king dies or is deposed. However, others infrequently practised both systems as

dictated by the circumstances. This is illustrated in the various family trees of the many Nyanjaghas (subkings or chiefs) described in this book where not only sons or brothers ascended to political power but also nephews and grandsons.

CHOOSING A M'NYANJAGHA

The first M'nyanjagha was Longwe, followed by Kazanduka. The question is, how was a M'nyanjagha chosen? Who chose him? Longwe, being the first M'nyanjagha, was spontaneously chosen by the people and other Nyanjaghas because of his good leadership qualities. He had his own chiefdom before being chosen as M'nyanjagha. They liked the way he administered his chiefdom and decided that he should be the leader of all the Tumbuka chiefdoms wherever they were established, not just his own chiefdom. The Tumbuka traditional authorities from many chiefdoms asked Longwe to lead them, and he humbly accepted the invitation.

From the time the office of M'nyanjagha was created by the Tumbuka, it was only M'nyanjagha who had powers to appoint the Nyanjaghas (subkings immediately under M'nyanjagha). However, before the first M'nyanjagha (Longwe) died, the Tumbuka prepared rules or qualifications for the subsequent M'nyanjaghas. The rules included the following: The M'nyanjagha had to be the nephew of the retired, deposed, or dead M'nyanjagha. When there was no suitable nephew or grandson, a brother was installed as M'nyanjagha.[44] He had to be a good person with a heart for his people. He had to have good morals in society.

---

[44] Almost all groups that broke off from the Luba Kingdom were or *became* matrilineal societies. Many of them left Luba without many women, especially their leader's (king) sister to bear them the future king. For this reason, they used sons and brothers to become kings. This means that for a brief period, they followed a patrilineal system of inheritance to political power. However, when they had enough nephews, some of the political authorities reverted to their original system of political inheritance through the matrilineal line. They then began installing nephews or grandsons as kings, chiefs, or headmen if they qualified.

Before a M'nyanjagha was chosen, an electoral college was constituted. The term *electoral college* is used here for lack of a better local term, and it is actually inappropriate in a traditional and customary setting. The term has a connotation and an implication that those in it exercise the right to vote. This was not the case in the Tumbuka society, and probably that was the same in many other traditional sub-Saharan African societies. The electoral college was in reality a verification process group, *an ad hoc group* that was reconstituted *only and merely to confirm* the person already 'known' traditionally to be the next M'nyanjagha in line with the already accepted qualifications, rules, or customary laws. That was a matter of principle. The choice of the M'nyanjagha was a hereditary matter, and it followed a clear biological royal bloodline through mainly the matrilineal system of succession. It was unthinkable for someone from outside the royal bloodline to contest for the position of a chief or a king.

Occasionally, when circumstances dictated, they conveniently and specifically applied the patrilineal system. The Tumbuka *were and still are by origin and culture a matrilineal society*. As earlier stated, the choosing of brothers and sons to be the M'nyanjaghas was by necessity in the absence of nephews. The nephews came much later, after possibly more than one generation, at a time when the M'nyanjagha family was able to provide sisters who bore them sons to be the next M'nyanjaghas. This was the situation in the first three to four decades of their kingdom and centuries before the arrival of the newcomers, the 'intruders' or 'colonisers'—mainly, the Chewa, Senga, Balowoka, and Ngoni. If a nephew became a king, he took the surname (which was the same as his mother's) of the uncle whom he had replaced. However, his (the nephew, the new king) children continued with his original surname prior to taking over the throne.

The verification process group consisted of the core family members in the village where the previous king lived and those in the other

---

But because of this background, Tumbuka clans had a mixed system of inheritance to political power, matrilineal or patrilinear, depending on the circumstances. However, it is the Tumbuka tradition and culture to use the matrilineal system of ascending to political power.

villages, the king's advisers, the subkings from the whole kingdom, and the kazembe, who was always the chairman at such discussions. The kazembe never came from the royal family but from the clan that was known to be the traditional cousin of the M'nyanjagha's clan, such as the Nyirenda and Mkandabile (Mkandawile, Kandawile) clans.

At the meeting to choose the M'nyanjagha, the kazembe, in the presence of the subkings that had arrived in the main village, asked the closest relatives of the deceased king or members of the royal family who they thought was the right person for the position of M'nyanjagha. They all participated in the discussions before the question was fully answered. If the mentioned name of the rightful heir was accepted by all present, then the group had little role to play and less time to spend in the village discussing the heir to the throne. But if for some reason, the mentioned name was not accepted by everyone, then the group had a role to play: that of making sure that the right person was chosen unanimously. They debated and argued until finally they agreed on the rightful heir.

After this, Kapole was told to take the message to two senior subkings, namely Kapemba and Chiti. He went to each of these subkings and broke the news individually, traditionally saying, 'I want a M'nyanjagha.' The recipient of the message knew exactly what that meant. Thereafter, Kapole narrated the discussions at the meetings of the verification process group (VPG) and revealed the name of the next M'nyanjagha chosen by the VPG. On hearing this, each of the two senior subkings investigated how the name was arrived at. Their aim was to find out if there was any favouritism in the choice of the name. They also investigated the royalty of the person chosen. If the two senior subkings thought that the person chosen was the right person, they informed the chiefs (or junior subkings), including Jalila, Chama, Chiti, Chiyunga, and Mugwera for their information and comments before such information was known to the whole kingdom. After commenting on the proposed name of the next M'nyanjagha, the good news was sent to all chiefdoms in the kingdom.

THE INSTALLATION PROCESS

The installation team comprised the kazembe, Kapemba, Chiti, and Kapole. The installation team chose a few other notables in society to be part of the group. As a tradition, the additional members had to come from outside the royal family. The chosen people prepared powder from white maize meal that was to be used to anoint the person to be the M'nyanjagha on a specific date. They also prepared the *crown*. It was made of a number of items, among which were special fibre, the *luvili* bird's feathers, a piece of processed dried lion's skin, and a piece of processed dried leopard's skin.[45] They also prepared an ivory bangle from elephant tusk, a bow and arrow, and a fly switch of wildebeest tail, loaded with medicine. The king carried his fly switch wherever he went. It was a symbol of his status and authority for everyone to see.

Lion's nails were strategically and carefully displayed in front of the crown to show that he was the king. He was also the only one who had a fly whisk made from the tail of a wildebeest. The subkings had all these royal regalia except the lion's nails in front of the crown and the fly switch from a wildebeest. Their fly switches were from other animals other than the wildebeest whose tail was exclusively reserved as a fly switch for the M'nyanjagha.

When all these things were made ready, the person to be the next king was summoned to the M'nyanjagha's village. He would not know the *real* reasons for calling him. However, in such circumstances, the message would usually say that a close relative in the M'nyanjagha's village was sick or that there was a family meeting at which he was required to attend without fail. A few moments after his arrival in the village and without warning, the people known as *balasi* (singular, *mulasi*), who were assigned the responsibility of installing the new M'nyanjagha, would quickly catch him, allowing him no time to

---

[45] From the time of the Ngoni's 'colonization' of the Tumbuka in the last half of the nineteenth century, the Tumbuka discovered that the Ngoni king, M'mbelwa, used the feathers of a *kaluzi* bird as part of the royal regalia.

resist, and would sprinkle the white maize meal powder on his head. Simultaneously, someone who was assigned the task would begin drumming the funeral drum.

There were three funeral drums according to their sizes: big, bigger, and biggest. Funeral drums were only drummed if someone had died or if a new king was being installed. Their sounds were very distinct and were a signal for calling people to go to the village where it was being drummed. The message about this event was quickly relayed to those in the kingdom who did not hear the sound of the funeral drum because their chiefdoms or villages were far away from the M'nyanjagha's village. For this occasion, people from all over the kingdom came to the main village to share the good news and pleasure of having a new M'nyanjagha and to witness the installation festival for the new king. As they entered the main village, the citizens of the kingdom openly showed their pleasure by playing drums used at times of enjoyment and danced in readiness for the final process of the installation. Note that for the king, all the three drums were played; for a subking or a chief, only two were played; and for an ordinary person, only one drum was played.

The final processes of installing the new king were completed the same day. However, the king was on probation for two years within which, if he committed a serious offence, he was removed by a majority 'vote' from the subkings in the kingdom. The M'nyanjagha's throne was made of elephant tusks. Two men sat *behind* the throne, their backs to the throne and facing away from the throne. Two other men sat in *front* of the throne, their backs to the throne and facing away from the throne. On *each* of the *two* other sides of the throne (left and right), there were also two men, their backs to the throne and facing away from it. People were not allowed to speak directly to the M'nyanjagha, but only and always through the kazembe.

The kazembe of the deceased M'nyanjagha was always the orator at the installation of the new M'nyanjagha. His task was to utter the traditional praises for the M'nyanjagha, king of the Tumbuka people. The praises were done in two languages—first, in Chi-Luba language, and, second, in Chi-Tumbuka language. The one in Chi-Luba

language went like this: 'Udi Muluba omwe wa balombodi abo bakeenda na Mutemi wa nkambwa pa kusambuka Mulonga (musulu) wa unene wa bitotsi ukafika pa Kalonga kaka kese apo uka angata ukwambulwisho kwa ufumu.' This translates to: You are a Muluba, one of the leaders and judges who were moving together with the senior leader and judge when crossing the first big muddy river until you received the blessing of kingship at a small river, Kalonga.

After the praise in Chi-Luba language, the orator went straight into the praise in Chi-Tumbuka. It went like this: 'Yebo Botawota M'nyanjagha Mbulalubilo Chipilikiti munkhozo wa nkalamu ukadyaka mulangali ukawa, pa chitala bakachita kubanyamulilapo. Likakoma ni jume la muchizgama nanga kachepe nimutembo wuwo akadyaka njoka yikafwa malunga. Kalambila mbuto muntu nta tikumulambila wambula kwenda chiyendeyende.' This translates to: Thanks to Botawota M'nyanjagha Mbulalubilo Chipilikiti, thigh of a lion, which stepped on a tree called *mulangali*, and fell off; he was just put on the bed. He was killed by plain dew in the ground-beans field. Though small, is still a corpse that stepped on a snake and it lost its powers to bite and failed to move. Honouring the seeds for a person who needs no honour, the one who does not move anyhow.

And he ended by saying: 'Yebo Chipilikiti, Yebo Chipilikiti.' Thank you Chipilikiti. Thank you, Chipilikiti. And all the people present responded simultaneously by saying: 'Munkhozo wa nkalamu.' Thigh of a lion.

After the praises, the senior subking Kapemba, as per tradition, instructed the new M'nyanjagha not to leave the palace for the next two months without his approval. He appointed three people to see that the new M'nyanjagha followed the traditional orders. Punishment for failure to follow the order was dethronement. However, although Kapemba had powers to put the M'nyanjagha on the throne, he had no powers to remove the king from the throne. This was because the M'nyanjagha was his king, so Kapemba had no powers to remove a king from the throne. After the two-year probation, a M'nyanjagha could only be removed by a majority 'vote' from all the subkings.

However, M'nyanjagha had powers to appoint or remove Kapemba or any other senior subking or any other chief.

M'nyanjagha had 'unlimited' political powers. The indunas rarely checked his powers. Everything was done in his name (in his power), and a number of important landmarks were named after him. For example, the second M'nyanjagha, Kazanduka, was commonly known as Ntuntika (the heart-cooler, the anger-cooler, or the feared one) and the hill near his original palace was named after him, Ntuntika. Also, every animal killed by his subjects during their many hunting sessions anywhere in the kingdom was said to have been killed by Ntuntika. Everything was done in his name and on his behalf. Any animal killed in the kingdom had to be shared with the M'nyanjagha. A part of the animal, usually a rear leg, was (preserved and) sent to the king. This system was not a form of tribute to the authority, but rather a mandatory practice for hunters to honour the local traditional authority.

Each time he made a trip to any place, he appointed people to accompany him. Usually, he appointed more than ten people, including some royal family members, two *bavyaka* (that is, protectors, watchmen, or security officers), four carriers, and a traditional doctor (*ng'anga*).[46] One of the duties of the bavyaka was to taste the food before M'nyanjagha ate it to find out if it was good or not. At the palace, the M'nyanjagha had a museum (*nyumba ya vyakale*) where the kingdom's old items depicting people's history and customs were kept.

[46] *Chaka*, singular, is an axe/hoe handle (plural, *vyaka*). This is a common weapon in the traditional Tumbuka society. Therefore, the bavyaka were those people in the king's entourage who carried various weapons with the sole responsibility of protecting the king.

Figure 4: Oliver Bota, Nyanjagha Mutuba, Kapemba Moto mu Musenga

It was M'nyanjagha Kazanduka who expanded much of the kingdom from 1490 to 1520. Most of the newly acquired territories were given to his close relatives who were answerable to him. Kazanduka did not stay long at Ntuntika, his initial headquarters. He left Ntuntika and set up his palace at Milulu in the present-day Chama District in Zambia near Bambanda valley close to the border with Mzimba District in Malawi. After a few years at Milulu, Kazanduka shifted the seat of the kingdom to Chipeta hill in the present-day Malawi before moving back to Ntuntika Mountains, where his palace was originally located.

At one time, the subjects from his village went on a hunting trip, and they saw a herd of elephants. The animals ran away and crossed Luwewe River. Kazanduka's people also followed them and crossed the river. They saw plenty of elephant droppings down the mountain that was later named Chinyawima (passing droppings while standing). They followed the elephants' footmarks and bypassed a mountain that they later called Chibambala (bypassing). Thereafter, they saw the same elephants again and were able to kill some, and in the process, the elephants also killed some of the hunters. In spite of losing hunters in that dangerous area, the people decided to establish a village in the same area. The village was named Ntuntika, the name of the reigning M'nyanjagha.

Figure 5: Lifted Bota, Nyanjagha Mugwera, Kapemba Moto mu Musenge

Mbuluko, one of Kazanduka's brothers in the hunting party, followed the elephants that went northward. Unfortunately, he was unable to find them. But he found nice agricultural land at a place that was later known as Bululuji. With permission from the king, his brother, he was able to settle there. The king advised him to make fire all the time at night in order to chase away the dangerous animals. This advice earned Mbuluko a new name: Kapemba Moto mu Musenga (the one who prepares fire in the back country/wilderness). Kapemba, as he was commonly called, had many sons, including Mugwela, Masapa, and Mambongo. Mugwela also had many children.

Later, all the children from Mbuluko's line were also known as Kapemba Moto mu Musenga. The only difference was that they always indicated their other names, such as Mugwela Kapemba Moto mu Musenga or simply Mugwela Kapemba. Although the name Kapemba was used by the two sons of Mugwela, there were clear differences in their full names: Kapemba Jumbu Mugwela was for the firstborn, while Kapemba Jalawe was for the second son. When praising Mugwela, they would to say, 'Yebo Nyanjagha' or 'Yebo Mutumbuka'. The Kapemba family lived at Mugwantha area near Chipeta with the M'nyanjagha. The place where they lived was known as Mutuba (the white one/the white place or the peaceful place). The

area had many places with salty soils that wild animals liked to lick. It was for this reason that Mbuluko was also commonly known as Mutuba Kapemba Moto mu Musenga.

Kapemba moved to Wila-Mphangala area, where he eventually married. Oral traditions say that his wife used to wear strings of local beads round her waist (beads worn round the woman's waist are known as *nthunda*) as a way of attracting her husband's sexual appetite. One day she was chased by a lion and, in the process, lost her beads. On hearing that she lost her valuable waist beads, the villagers began looking for them. Fortunately, one man from the village found them. The man asked for a present from Kapemba for finding his wife's beads. The man refused an axe that Kapemba offered. He wanted Kapemba to give him a piece of land in his territory. Initially, Kapemba refused, but in the end, he was able to install the man as a village leader (headman) called Mutanila muzi wa Kapemba (getting by force part of Kapemba's village). Up to this day, the village is still called Mutanila. Kapemba's territory was very big. It covered Homani Bantu (scared people) and Mutanila areas. Other village heads in the territory included Masapa, Mambongo, Mbaluko, Silimpala, and Mutakwa.

From Ntuntika Mountains, M'nyanjagha Kazanduka again shifted his seat of government to Zaro marsh, where he established a very big village and the royal burial grounds. It seems all the subsequent M'nyanjaghas ruled the kingdom from Zaro. There is no mention in oral traditions of a M'nyanjagha shifting from here to another place. For more details of the names of the M'nyanjaghas, see the list below and also figures 1 and 2 for the Tumbuka ethnic family trees (charts).

DEATH, FUNERAL, AND BURIAL OF M'NYANJAGHA

When M'nyanjagha died, Kapole sent the message about the death of the king *first* to Kapemba, using a special messenger and employing the usual traditional mata pa jani or mata pa thepo (saliva on a leaf) method.[47] Only after Kapemba received the message was it appropriate to begin sending the same message to the rest of the kingdom through the same fast method of sending or delivering messages by using a messenger (or a group of messengers going into different directions, depending on the nature of the message)—from the palace to the next village and then from that village to the next village until the message reached all corners of the kingdom. This was a fast, efficient, and interesting way of sending messages in a vast territory.

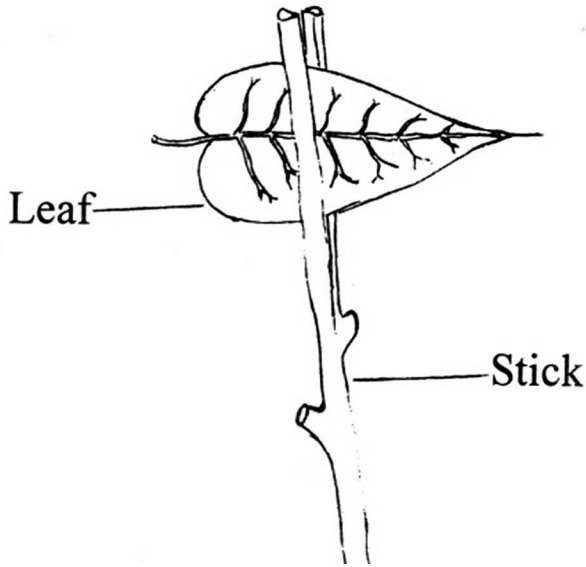


Figure 6. Mata pa jani

[47] That is to say, before the saliva on the leaf dries up, the messenger will have delivered the message to the next village and come back to report that he has done so. Most likely, the saliva was that of the person who sent the messenger to deliver the message—for example, Kapole or headman.

How did the mata pa jani method of transmitting and delivering message in the kingdom work? The messenger carried a stick in one hand. One end of the stick was split into two and had a leaf fitted into the crack, while the other end of the stick was where the messenger held the stick in his hand as he moved from his 'source village', the village that was the source of the message to the next village, the 'recipient village' only. See the mata pa jani stick in Figure 6. On reaching the recipient village, the messenger delivered the message by shouting the words at some spot in the village. If the messenger reached the recipient village at night, he delivered the message to the village headman. After delivering the message, he quickly returned to his village. His quick return to his village confirmed that the message had been safely delivered, and he also reports the time it had taken to deliver the message.

Immediately on receiving the message, the headman of the receiving village appointed another messenger from his village to take the delivered message to the next village at that time and in the same way: carrying a stick with a leaf. The message was not allowed to spend a night in one village. If a passerby found the stick with a leaf but the messenger or messengers were found dead on the way, maybe killed by the wild animals or for whatever reasons, the passerby had to immediately alert the next village on either side of the route and establish the source and destination of the message, and new messengers had to be appointed immediately by the appropriate headman. The last village to receive the message in the kingdom sent a messenger with the message to the king's place. The final process confirmed that the message the king sent to the people had been received. It also confirmed the accuracy of the message sent and received in the kingdom. (Did the last village receive the same message that the first village received from the king?) The mata pa jani communication system was also used for delivering messages among villages in one chiefdom or among chiefdoms in the kingdom.

The news of the death of the M'nyanjagha could also be known to the people in the kingdom by the beating of the usual funeral drums. The drums were played on orders from Kapole or the prime

minister after he informed Kapemba about the death of the king. That was done before all other subkings knew about the death of the king. The special messenger to inform Kapemba was given two small traditional plates made from bamboo. In one plate was put a string of beads of no specific colour. The other plate of equal size was used to cover the one with beads. On arrival, the messenger traditionally delivered the plates to Kapembe with the words 'The king has left us' or 'The king is lost'. Without necessarily mentioning the word *dead*, the messenger stated the time when the king was lost or left the kingdom. The usual Kapemba's traditional response to the message of death of the king was 'I will come there and look for the lost king together with the people so that we find him'. What Kapemba meant was that he was going to bury the dead king, and after that, he was going to look for someone to act as M'nyanjagha before choosing the heir to the king.

Before the arrival of Kapemba, the drummers played without pointing to the graveyard where the king would be buried. They did that because they did not know where the king was going to be buried. However, this changed with the arrival of Kapemba, who ordered the drummers to point at the specific place (graveyard) where the king would be buried as they were beating the drums. On arrival, Kapemba could also beat the same drums, and while doing so, he *pointed* to the place where the king was going to be buried. That was just a traditional ritual performed by Kapemba and was also the drummers' *welcome gesture* to him. That was because drummers or people in the village already knew where the king was going to be buried—at the royal burial grounds.

As earlier noted, there are different types of funeral drums. Depending on the occasion for which the drums are being played, there are different tones of the sounds coming from the drums.[48] Each tone has a specific meaning to which people respond. Normally, there were

[48] It seems the Senga (Bisa) in Chamanyavyose (Chama District) copied this system of 'communication by drums', and from 1992, they started their own Kwenje traditional ceremony. *Kwenje* is the distinct sound or tone produced by a special drum once played by a trained person at this ceremony.

four such tones for the following reasons: for the funeral message when a person is lost, when a human-eating wild animal is in the vicinity and is terrorising the people, and when there is a peaceful gathering. If it is a tone for the human-eating wild animal, the people would become aware of this danger, and within a short period of time, the men in the relevant territory would come together and hunt and kill the dangerous animal.

The Tumbuka did not bury their kings with live people as the Balowoka, Senga, and Ngoni, who came later in their territory, did. The Tumbuka buried their kings together with their properties, such as bow and arrow, spears, axes, hoes, other utensils, clothes, and so on. The other properties of the deceased king were left for his children and wives. There was no fighting for the property. Very few things were left for the new king to inherit. If the dead M'nyanjagha left young wives, they were allowed to choose men in the family to inherit them. Here again, Kapemba, the senior traditional brother of the king, played an important role in this issue. For details on the Tumbuka burial procedures, read chapter 9.

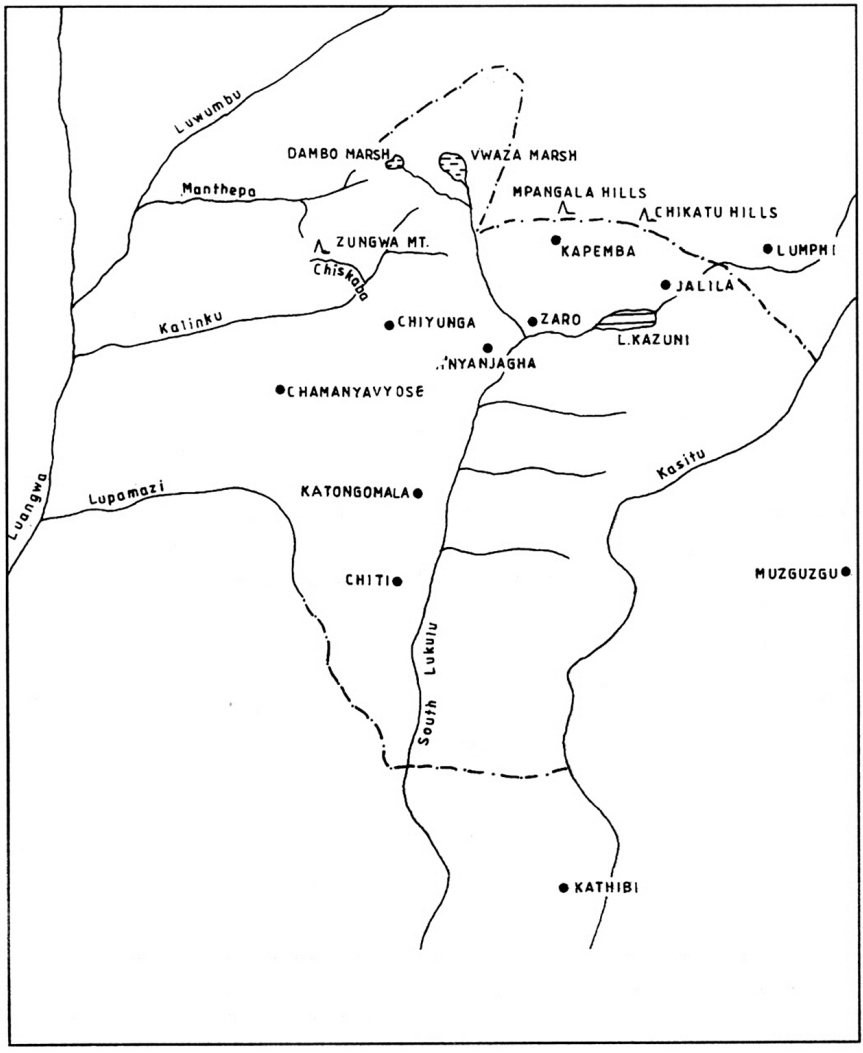
THE TUMBUKA KINGDOM, 1460–1800

Longwe, the first M'nyanjagha from 1460 to 1490, ruled a small state of the Tumbuka made up of a collection of independent chiefdoms that *voluntarily* joined together to achieve political unity. That is to say, after noting Longwe's quality leadership in his chiefdom, the independent Nyanjaghas outside his chiefdom willingly offered to become subordinates to him. Before Longwe died of old age in 1490, he expanded the small state into a medium-sized kingdom. The Tumbuka Kingdom was created through what we may accurately call a voluntaristic state-building strategy. This is a system where people or chiefs voluntarily leave their individual sovereignties and unite with other communities or chiefs to create a larger political unit that deserves to be called a state. In this context, a state will be defined as an autonomous political unit with many communities and chiefs within

its territory and with a central government that has power to receive tribute, mobilise men for war or community work, and enforce laws.

This is what happened to the Tumbuka society. The first state under M'nyanjagha Longwe was created by independent Tumbuka chiefdoms that voluntarily united to form a larger political unit. The state that was created had soldiers (bavyaka) who not only enforced laws or regulations but also oversaw the delivery of tributes from the people to their king (the central authority) through the headmen and the subkings.

The medium-sized original kingdom left by M'nyanjagha Longwe covered the area from Kasito River in the present Northern Malawi to Luangwa River in the west. From Luangwa River, the boundary went eastward, following the Luwumbu River, and went further east, following the Manthepa River. Just before the source of the Manthepa River, the boundary went southward to Zungwa hill. From Zungwa hill, the boundary followed the Chiskawa stream, a tributary of Kalinku River. From there, the boundary followed Kalinku River to its source, then followed the Mbala Kayira stream to its source in the Phalalanjati area and continued to Chondoka Village (the one in Malawi) before crossing Luwewe River. The boundary continued from Luwewe River to Bululuji, which was Kapemba's area. This was the original Kapemba's area. The Kapemba's family had lived there since the creation of the



Map 3. Extent of the initial Tumbuka Kingdom under M'nyanjagha Longwe between 1460 and 1490

kingdom until 1975, when the area was declared a game reserve by the Malawian government. The boundary went up to Mphangala hills and continued to behind Chikatu hill. The boundary continued passing on to the northern part of Kamphenda Lusano, Mutanila Chalo cha Kapemba (Thulwe area), and Jalila before crossing South Rukulu to Dolola and Chiwuluntha. It then reached Kasito River and followed the river southward to near Kathibi (Mzimba).

From here, the boundary went westward, leaving Luanjazi and Lubebwya rivers and crossed South Rukulu River and went south-west, leaving Mutasuka Mwanza Village. From here, the boundary passed far south from Chauti and Chanyumbu rivers. Manda hill (at the present, Khulamayembe Village on the way to Chama) and Chimbavi Village were inside the early kingdom. The informants were not sure whether the present Chilubaluba Nyongo Village was there at that time. However, the boundary continued westward up to the mouth of Lupamazi River on the Luangwa River, which marked the western boundary of the kingdom. Probably, proximity to Luangwa River was what encouraged Chamanyavyose to go west of the initial kingdom and establish his chiefdom there in the Luangwa Valley. See Map 3 for details of the initial Tumbuka Kingdom under Longwe, the first M'nyanjagha.

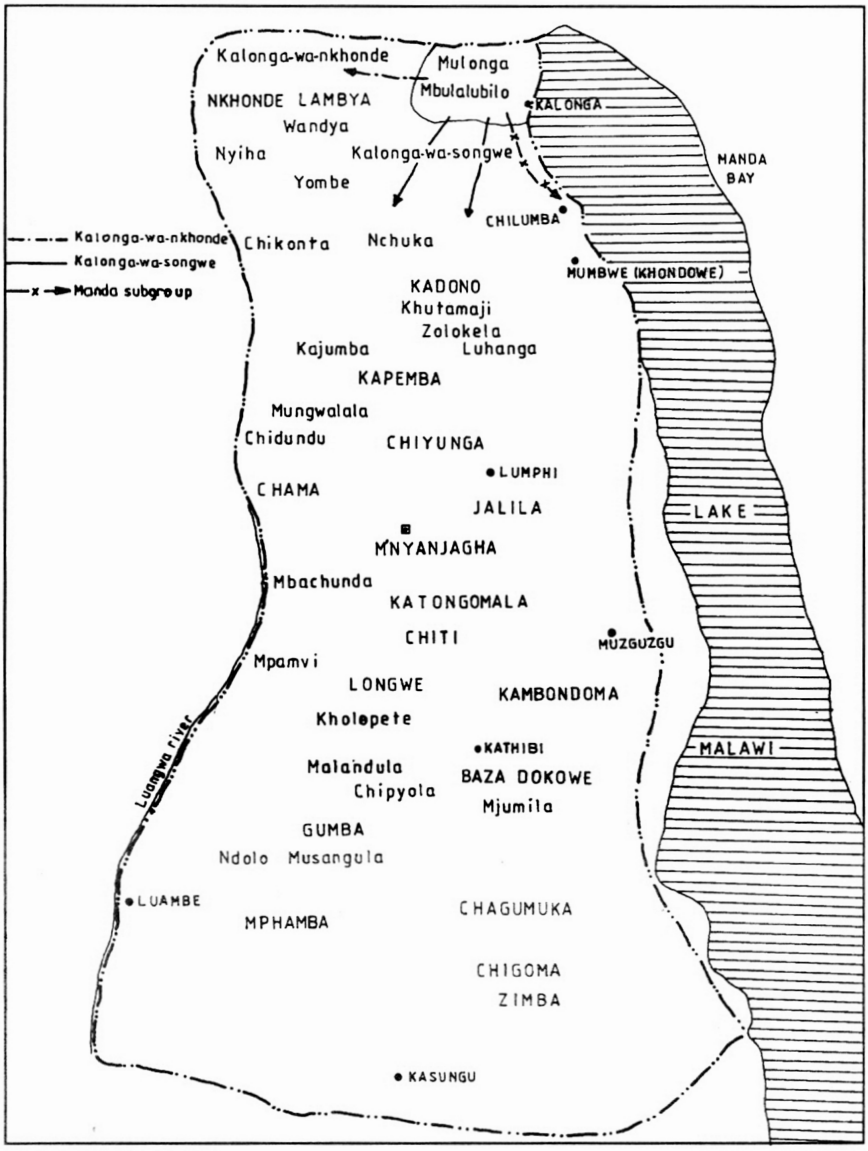
Kazanduka, the second M'nyanjagha, expanded the medium-sized kingdom into a big empire not by conquest but by occupying empty land that was left by many frightened Saan communities, locally known as the Bakafula or the Mwaniwonelanku people. They were called Bakafula because they were iron ore smelters and forged iron tools. They were also known as Mwaniwonelanku because they were very short people, and they were so conscious of their height that each time they met the tall Bantu-speaking Tumbuka, they always asked them from what distance they saw them (the Saan).[49] These were the earliest indigenous inhabitants

[49] The oral traditions mention the Mwaniwonelanku (meaning: 'From which point did you see me when I was coming?') as stout people excellent at iron-smelting and hunting. If a Tumbuku said that he saw

of the territory with whom the Tumbuka coexisted for a short period before the Saan gradually ran away, leaving the Tumbuka on their own, or before the demographically and physically superior Tumbuka pushed them to the south-west.

By 1520, M'nyanjagha Kazanduka had expanded the kingdom to include territory from Mzuzu in Northern Malawi to Bua River in the south. The southern boundary followed Bua

a Mwaniwonelanku from very close to him, it meant that his answer was confirming that the Mwaniwonelanku was indeed a very short person. This made him very angry and resulted in a fight. However, if the Tumbuka said that he saw him from a distance, it meant that he were saying that the Mwaniwonelanku was in fact a tall person like the Tumbuka. This answer made him very happy and was the beginning of a friendship between them. A few intermarried with the Tumbuka, but many of them lived on their own before they disappeared to the south-west of the present Zambia.



Map 4. Tumbuka Chiefdoms before 1520

River westward up to Kasungu.[50] From Kasungu the boundary continued westward up to the mouth of Lukusuzi River. From Bua River in the south, the Tumbuka kingdom stretched all the way to the historic Songwe River in the north. From Songwe River, the boundary took a western direction up to the source of Luangwa River. This river marked the western boundary of the kingdom. The whole kingdom covered an area of over 20,000 square miles (51,000 square kilometres). For details, see Map 4.

Using the data from the field interviews, we have been able to chronologically put together the names of *some* of the M'nyanjaghas/ Nyanjaghas that ruled the Tumbuka people since the fifteenth century. These are as follows:

- From 1400 to 1800:

  Mulonga Mbulalubilo Muluba, founder (1400–1430) (Mulonga clan)

  Kalonga wa Songwe, son of Mulonga Mbulalubilo

  Muluba, (Mulonga clan)

  Kayazga Ntambwe (Lion), son (Mulonga clan)

  Mukamanga (owner of coconut trees), son (Mulonga clan)

[50] Kasungu area was part of the Tumbuka Kingdom. The area was at one time under Chief Mphamba. Cullen Young confirmed that Kasungu was once part of the Tumbuka Kingdom when he stated, 'Old men in the district of Mwasi [*sic*] Kasungu who have a hazy childhood memory of Livingstone have told me that they were at one time Tumbuka and spoke Chi-Tumbuka. . . . A large percentage of the words in Rebman's *kiNiassa Dictionary* is pure Chi-Tumbuka, hardly differing from the speech of today.' This is what Cullen Young wrote in his book that was published in 1932. Research for this book must have been done in the 1920s. Read Young, *Notes on the History of the Tumbuka–Kamanga Peoples in the Northern Province of Nyasaland,* p. 24.

Nyanjagha	Katungambizi I, son (Botawota clan), the first one to use the title Nyanjagha
M'nyanjagha	Longwe I, first M'nyanjagha (1460–1490), the first one to use the title M'nyanjagha
M'nyanjagha	Kazanduka, second M'nyanjagha, son
M'nyanjagha	Gonthaminga, son of Vilunde, nephew
M'nyanjagha	Chimunyila, son of Maheni, nephew
M'nyanjagha	Katumbikika, son
M'nyanjagha	Mitawata, son
M'nyanjagha	Musiwila, son of Jenala from Jalila, nephew
M'nyanjagha	Gwamba, *stepbrother* from Jalila, son
M'nyanjagha	Thambalika, *stepbrother* from Chiti, son
M'nyanjagha	Wombwe (Chihomaniche), son
M'nyanjagha	Chitukula, *stepbrother* from Chiyunga, son.

- From 1800 to 1840:

M'nyanjagha	Chibanjala I, son.

- From 1840 to 1936:

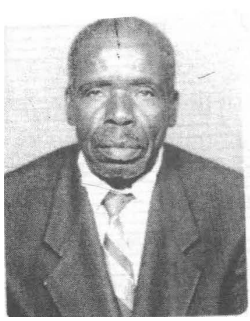
M'nyanjagha	Sakalale, son of Nyanje from Chamanyavyose (Chama) at Buli (he was Mtonga, and he is the one that the Ngoni found)
M'nyanjagha	Chanangika, son of Genesi, nephew
M'nyanjagha	Kaluka Nthala Luwewe, son of Samanayo, nephew
M'nyanjagha	Longwe II, son
M'nyanjagha	Wajontha, grandson of Duba (Duwa), died in 1936.

- From 1940 to 1968 :

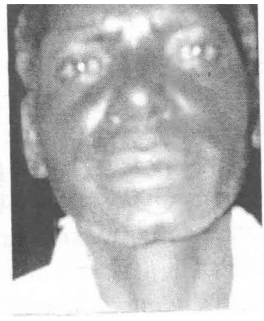
M'nyanjagha	Alifeyo, grandson of Zganga.

- From 1968 to 2002:

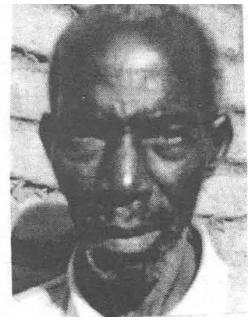
M'nyanjagha	Stalin, great-grandson of Zganga.



Lyson Bota, Acting Chief Chiti



Mutankwa Kumwenda, Group Village Headman Wato



Patson Nthara, Village Headman Kaluka

Figure 7:

Although now he has no kingdom to rule, the present M'nyanjagha (Stalin) is still in principle the traditional overall ruler of the Tumbuka people. He is the twentieth M'nyanjagha and also the twenty-fourth leader of the Tumbuka—if we begin with Mulonga Mbulalubilo, the leader that brought them from the Luba Kingdom.

M'nyanjagha Stalin's current group village headmen include Wato, M'chintha, Wombwe, Kapole, and Mulwagwa. His current village headmen include M'nyanjagha (Kaluba) Kazanduka, Longwe, Chihomaniche, and Chimunyila (the Bota clan). Others are Kalindamawe (now commonly known as Mukulama or M'kulama), Kaluka (Simon), Lameck, Phillimon, Mulyanyungu, Chanangika, Pholobele, Wajontha, Mpita, Selemani, Mtambalika, Geza, Kazilondo, Vumbe, Kazizwa, Kamunga, Makoloti, Sitolo, Kasilizga, Nkhombole, Vunjamo, Musate, Chagunyuka, Dumiya, and Chikwabanda.

SOME OF THE CHIEFDOMS IN THE M'NYANJAGHA TUMBUKA KINGDOM

As we stated in the foregoing paragraphs, the M'nyanjagha ruled his kingdom with the assistance of the Nyanjaghas, who reported to him all serious cases that needed his attention. He visited the

Nyanjaghas from time to time to see the developments taking place in their chiefdoms. The Nyanjaghas also visited the king every year to offer tributes and to participate in the annual Tumbuka traditional ceremony, Mabazgo. The king summoned his Nyanjaghas to the palace whenever it was necessary to do so. There were also many inter-chiefdom visits by the Nyanjaghas. Each Nyanjagha toured his chiefdom frequently to see for himself the problems his people were facing. What the Nyanjagha saw in his chiefdom during the tours he undertook made up a large part of his *verbal* report to the people at the Mabazgo ceremony.

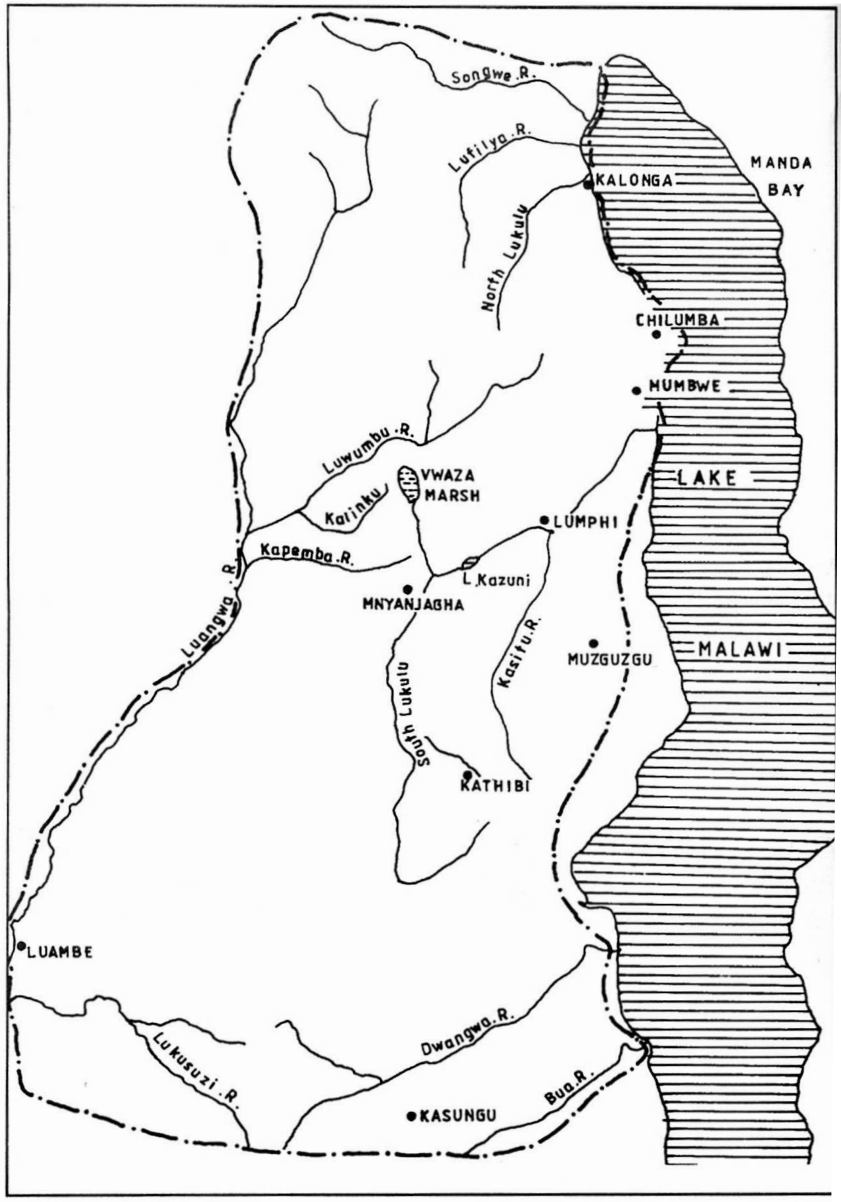
Below are *some* of the chieftaincies that were part of the Tumbuka Kingdom that the *informants could remember*. Unfortunately, the informants could not remember all the chiefdoms in the whole M'nyanjagha Kingdom. The chiefdoms described below are mostly those from the northern part of the kingdom. There is need for urgent research to know the details of the chiefs that ruled the chiefdoms in the southern part of the kingdom. See Map 4 for details of the chiefdoms in the kingdom.

CHIHOMANICHE'S CHIEFDOM

Mitawata's children were Chihomaniche, Kapole, Zengawako (also known as Muzengamuzi), and many whose names the informants could not remember.[51] Chihomaniche was first Headman Wombwe (Wombwe Chihomaniche) before becoming a Nyanjagha, and later in his life, he was chosen as the M'nyanjagha. He had many wives. Those remembered by the informants included Tamala, Mapa, Towela and

[51] Information on the Chihomaniche Chiefdom came from many people. The most important were: Thapson Chirwa, fifty-six years old, interviewed at Rumphi Council Market, Malawi, on November 1998; Radwick Mhango, seventy years old, interviewed at M'nyanjagha Village, Chief Mpherembe, Malawi, on November 1998; and Kadoda Nyirenda, sixty years old, interviewed at Chamaliwa School, Chief Chindi, Mzimba (Kathibi), Malawi.

the most junior wife, Wayine. Wombwe Chihomaniche's wives had many children, but the informants could only remember three males and one female from the first three wives. These included Vukizga, Mwiza, Chalombantu (commonly known as Chalo) and Duwa. We were told that the older children of Chihomaniche never became chiefs after their father died. They feared being bewitched by their aunt's children (their cousins) if they took up the chieftainship. For this reason, the chief came from the Chiyunga Bota clan. The history of Mwiza and Chalombantu is not known, and it seems they had no children.



Map 5. *Tumbuka Kingdom at its Greatest Extent, 1520*

Figure 8: Maxon Nyondo Bota, Headman Luvwanga in Chief Chiti

Robert Chilembo, Mutunga Village, Chiyunga, Chief Kambombo

Last Bota, Kabeya Village, Chiyunga, Chief Kambombo

Vukizga had three children—namely, Genesi, Gwazamawuba, and Samanayo. Gwazamawumba was slightly insane and had female children only and, as per tradition, none of them ever enherited the throne. Nobody knows about the grandchildren; as a result, no one from that line of Gwazamawumba is traced today. Genesi was married to Chawinga, father of Chanangika, while Samanayo was married to Kachali. The marriage with Kachali ended, and Chupu Nthala from Kazuni married Samanayo. This Nthala was from Nthala clan found at the M'nyanjagha's area today. The son of Samanayo named Kaluka Luwewe got married to Chikhale, his distant cousin, daughter of Muskankontho. Duwa was married to Nyirongo and had a daughter named Mulichi. Mulichi was married by Nyirenda (a fellow Mukamanga) from Ng'anjo Village in Chamanyavyose's (Chama) chiefdom.

Wayine bore many children, but only one son, Chibanjala, is remembered. When Chihomaniche died, Chibanjala did not become a chief because he was just a small boy. That was a time of famine because locusts destroyed the crops. His mother went with him to a place near Lake Malawi to go and work for food. When they reached their destination, their arrival coincided with the smallpox epidemic. The local people thought that the disease was brought by the new arrivals, Chibanjala's group.

Chibanjala's group was subjected to the *mwavi* ordeal (discussed in chapter 7) to prove that they were not the ones who brought the disease. Chibanjala's mother, being the late chief's wife, was asked to drink the mwavi on behalf of every newcomer from the Chihomaniche's chiefdom. She vomited the mwavi, proving their collective innocence. As compensation for character defamation, the new arrivals were given a piece of land, where they settled. Chibanjala's mother got married to a local man named Mabagha and bore two sons, who grew up together with Chibanjala.

When Chibanjala grew up, he was advised to go back to his chiefdom. Indeed, he left and went westward up to where Katongomala was. It was Katongomala who took him to Zaro. At Zaro, he found Kapole, who was staying at Chinyawima. At that time, the M'nyanjagha

was Chitukula. When Chitukula died, Chibanjala took over as M'nyanjagha. Later on, his stepbrothers, Mabagha's sons, followed him, and Chibanjala gave them a piece of land across South Lukulu River within the chiefdom, where they settled. He made them settle at the eastern side of South Lukulu because the land was his and it was not occupied by anybody.

Chibanjala married three wives. His first wife had only female children. The ones remembered by the informants are Tikole and Muskankontho. The second wife had Kasubiskanga as the only son, who also married and had female children only. The third wife was Chakola. Before Chibanjala married her, Chakola was married to Nyirenda (the Kaunga clan). Marriage ended with Nyirenda, and that was when Chibanjala married Chakola. From Chakola, Chibanjala had a son, Longwe II (also known as Kazanduka II or Jumphavisinga).

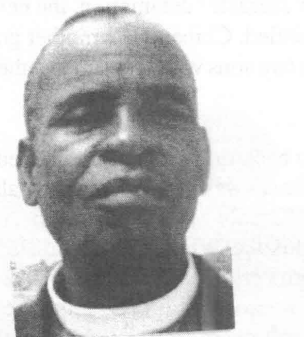
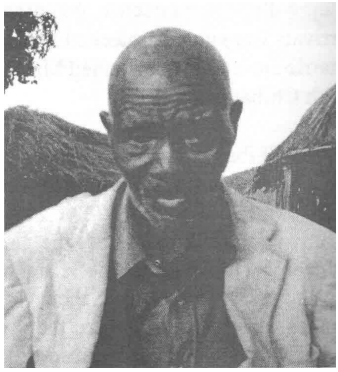
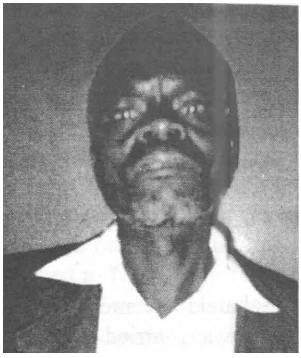


Figure 9: Rev. Tennyson Mkandawire, Mpherembe, Mzimba, Malawi



Paul Nkholongo, a Sukuma From central Tanzania, at Mwami SDA Hospital in Chipata, Zambia



Standford Chirwa, Mukopela Village, Chief Zumwanda, Zambia, in 2000

When Chibanjala died, Longwe II was small, and Sakalale became a *regent*. Sakalale was a nephew of Chibanjala, a son of Nyanje Nyabota, who was married at Buli in Chama's chiefdom. Many informants said that Sakalale was from the Mtonga clan and was a cousin to the Nkhata clan at Buli. He is the one that the Ngoni found ruling when they came to Chibanjala's chiefdom in the South Lukuru area. When Sakalale died, Chanangika Chawinga, a nephew, and a son of Genesi became the M'nyanjagha for a short time before he also died.

Muskankontho was the mother of Muchempwa, Mulazamila, Chikhale, and Chimbwambwa. Muchempwa was the grandmother of Zung'uzu. Mulazamila married Chirwa and bore Zakeyo Chirwa, who became Kapole at one time. Chikhale married her cousin Kaluka and bore Mweuka Nthara. Chimbwambwa married Mujumila Nyirongo and bore Lazaro and Davide. After Chanangika, Kaluka Nthala, son of Samanayo, became the M'nyanjagha for a short time. He did not want to continue as chief after ruling for a short time. Kaluka was from a Ngoni father and was not ready to take a maternal chieftainship. This was a strange culture for him as the Ngoni take paternal chieftainships. Since the father was a Ngoni, he correctly considered himself a Ngoni, and hence he did not like to be a chief through the maternal line in the family. Longwe II went to Ng'anjo Village in the present Chama District in Zambia to ask for his nephew Wajotha Nyirenda, son of Mulichi, to be the chief.

Longwe II had three wives. The first wife was barren. The second wife had only two daughters—namely, Nyanje and Jembe. The third wife, Funa Nyazimba from Munyakanyaka Village, had four children—two males and two females. These were Meya (Wayine); Chigomola (also known as Lameck), Leya, and Chizamusoka (also known as Simeone), the father of Frackson Fwilachalo Bota (the co-author of this book). The fifth child, Genesi, was Funa's child, not Longwe's child. Funa had this child after Longwe II died. Longwe II refused to continue as M'nyanjagha in his old age. He wanted someone from the family to take over in an acting capacity. This created some problems because by that time, the Balowoka, particularly the Chikulamayembe group, *seriously* got involved in the Tumbuka politics, and this negatively

impacted on the smooth administration of the Tumbuka chieftaincies in the crumbling kingdom.

CHAMANYAVYOSE'S CHIEFDOM

Chamanyavyose (the one who knows everything), popularly known as Chama,[52] was one of M'nyanjagha Longwe's children. He broke off from his father just before his father became the first M'nyanjagha of the Tumbuka Kingdom. Chamanyavyose broke off from his father and, together with his supporters (which included his mother and members of the clan), migrated westward. He broke away on the grounds that his father was ill-treating his mother. He was also looking for a better place where to settle, away from Kacheche, the name of the place where his father lived before he broke away.

On their migration westward, Chamanyavyose and his team crossed many hills before reaching the famous Nyika Plateau. From there, the group descended to the Luangwa Valley. After a short time in the valley, the group went north as far as Kamphumbu, Isoka District, in the present-day Muchinga Province of Zambia. It was there where some of his subordinates adopted the name Katyetye of the royalty in Kamphumbu. For some political reasons, the group abandoned Chief Katyetye, whom they found in Kamphumbu, and decided to go back to the Luangwa Valley. Chamanyavyose was with heads of the clans,

---

[52] As earlier stated, Chamanyavyose was a son and subking to M'nyanjagha Longwe. He occupied the current Chama District long before the Senga arrived there. Technically, the district's correct full name is supposed to be Chamanyavyose District, not just Chama District. I hope the relevant authorities will read this book and change the name accordingly in the near future. Much of the information on this chieftaincy came from the following sources: Headman Kabanda (over sixty years), Chama Boma, Chief Kambombo, interviewed on 28 June 1990; Headman Kanyerere (over seventy years), Kanyerere Village, Chief Kambombo, interviewed on November 1998; Nyanjagha Zacharia Bota, eighty-two years old, Chama Village, Chief Kambombo, interviewed on 6 August 1998.

including the notable Mungwalala, Mungulube, Nchuka, Chikontha, Chizembe, and Chilumanga. Few of the people in Chamanyavyose's group settled on the west bank of Luangwa River. The vast majority settled in the areas east of the river.

Figure 10: Nyanjagha Zacharia Bota, the current Headman Chama, Chief Kambombo

After crossing Lungwa River, the Chikontha division of the Nyimbili (Kubona) clan in the group decided to settle in a large and productive valley with plenty of game. Chikontha occupied north-western part of Chamanyavyose's chiefdom. Some of Chamanyavyose's people settled south-east of Chikontha in the middle Luwubu River Valley in an area commonly known today as Sitwe. The Nchuka group of the Chilembo (the Bangala) clan decided to settle in the upper Luwumbu River. The two subchiefs, Chikontha and Nchuka, shared the boundary at Mphemba in Muyombe.

Chamanyavyose and the remainder of his group went south, taking a route that was parallel to the mountains on the east. After travelling for many days, they came to rest at a river. As usual, while there, his men were actively engaged in hunting. One evening, they brought a live dove from their hunting expedition and kept it in a cage for the night so that the following morning they could prepare it for their subking. For it not to fly off, its wings were broken, but its legs were

not. This way, it was able to move within the cage but could not fly off. At night, the bird escaped through an opening in the cage. The following morning, they found the cage empty; the dove had escaped. They quickly mounted an intensive search for the bird on the nearby stream. They kept on asking and complaining: 'Where is the bird?' This is locally translated as 'Kalinku Kayuni?' After some time, they saw it in the reeds on the bank of the stream. They chased it, but the bird went into the reeds and disappeared. From that time, the unnamed river was named Kalinku (Where is it?) River—after the dove that disappeared in the reeds on the river.

It seems the Chamanyavyose group considered the loss of the dove as bad omen for them. For this reason, they left the place and continued their search for a good area in which to settle. They went further south to Kamphemba River (a corruption of Kapemba) and decided to settle on its upper part, where there were plenty of water and very good soil. Chamanyavyose made the area his headquarters. He ruled the entire chiefdom from there. His territory extended westward up to Luangwa River; eastward, it went beyond the range of mountains bordering with the other chiefdoms and, on the southern part the kingdom, stretched up to south of Luambe. From Luambe, the chiefdom extended eastward into the Mphamba's chiefdom, which is currently part of Lundazi District.[53]

Chamanyavyose was a very good leader who was known for being fair in his judgement and was also a very good hunter of big animals, especially elephants. His praise name was and still is: 'Botawota Nyanjagha Musolomoka kuchanya Chibinimbi thepwele kavula

[53] The Portuguese expedition to the king of the Lunda Kazembe in Luapula Valley (Zambia) under Dr de Lacerda in 1798 found Tumbuka living east of Luangwa River at Luambe. For details on this, read Young, *Notes on the History of the Tumbuka–Kamanga Peoples*, p. 21. Besides Dr de Lacerda, Dr David Livingstone, the celebrated Scottish missionary who extensively travelled in Central Africa, reported *of the same people* in his 1859–1866 reports as being in 'the areas inland of Nyasa on its western side'. Read Young, 'The "Wa-Henga" of Northern Nyasaland', *Journal of the African Society*, vol. xxiii (1923–24), pp. 188–193. See Map 6.

mpande wanangwa ntha wovula.' This is translated as: Chief Botawota, the one who drops from heaven, the one who takes off his bangle of leadership, yet it is taboo to take off the bangle of leadership.

The meaning of 'drops from heaven' was in relation to the way he travelled across the mountains and the problems he faced before he finally settled in the Luangwa Valley. His official territorial or chiefdom throne (royal seat) was a compartment about two metres high above the ground, supported by strong poles from the *mubanga* tree. The top was made of elephant tusks. There were always two men seated under the throne, each facing in the opposite direction. The throne was *like* a small *upstairs compartment* (*gongwe*). The custom was that every subject coming close to the throne had to kneel down before Nyanjagha Chamanyavyose on the throne. Those passing near the throne had to kneel down some distance away from him before continuing with their journey. Nyanjagha Chamanyavyose's chiefly regalia comprised a *crown* of leopard skin and a stick in his hand. He was only spoken to through his prime minister (kazembe) or his *senior* advisor (yinthini), not directly. The second in power to Chamanyavyose was Mungwalala Kaleya Kazilondo Mukhala pa Banthu. His throne was a very high stool. Two men were always seated under the throne, each facing in the opposite direction.

While Chikontha and Nchuka controlled the north and north-east respectively on behalf of Chamanyavyose, Mungwalala controlled the central area, and Chidundu controlled the western area up to Luangwa River. Kajumba, Chidundu's son, controlled the area north of Mungwalala up to the border with Chikontha, Nchuka, and Mowa. Kajumba, who died in 1923, was Chidundu's grandson. Mbachunda controlled the territory south of Chamanyavyose's headquarters, including the territory south of Chidundu's area. South of these areas was territory under Mpamvi, another of Chamanyavyose's subordinates. Chamanyavyose's brothers—namely, Chiyunga, Chiti, Katongomala, Jalila, and Kapemba—on the eastern side of the hills frequently visited him and vice versa. They were, after all, people and rulers from the same family.

The founder of the Tumbuka chiefdom in the Luangwa Valley was Nyanjagha Botawota Musolomoka ku chanya Chamanyavyose. Informants in the field could only remember by name the first Chamanyavyose. The subsequent ones could not be remembered by name until the arrival of the Bisa in the chiefdom in 1780. Thus, what we call the second Chamanyavyose was not really the *serially second one* but the second one that the informants could remember. Having explained this therefore, the second one was Chasweka Fwasani Musolomoka Botawota Chamanyavyose, who was also known as Chamanyavyose Mutayachalo. He was given the name Mutayachalo (losing land) because he was the one who lost the chiefdom to the Bisa (Senga). Chamanyavyose Mutayachalo had many children, but the informants could only remember seven of them. These were Zgala, also known as Kanabeza (a name given to him by the Senga), Kabanda, Kabende (also known as Musovyadimba), Lukombozi, Chote, Kazumba, and a beautiful daughter, Mulolwa. The Timeline below shows their family tree from about 1460.[54] Kanabeza was the third Chamanyavyose after his father, Chamanyavyose Mutayachalo.

RULERS OF CHAMANYAVYOSE'S CHIEFDOM

From about 1460:

Nyanjagha *Chamanyavyose* Musolomoka Botawota

Nyanjagha Chasweka Botawota

Many Nyanjaghas not remembered by informants.

---

[54] Note that the name Chama for Chamanyavyose is now being used as if it was the original *title* of a chief. *It was not*, but it was the *name of the leader* of the group, *Chamanyavyose* of the Botawota clan. His title was Nyanjagha, a subking. So all subsequent subkings after Chamanyavyose are supposed to be accurately called by the title Nyanjagha and not Chamanyavyose. However, the name Chama is still being used today.

From 1780 to 1800:	
	Nyanjagha Fwasani Musolomoka Mutayachalo Bota (the one who lost the land to the Senga).
From 1800:	
	Nyanjagha Kanabeza Musolomoka Bota
	Nyanjagha Mutule Bota
	Nyanjagha Mulyawima (son of Chakola) (nephew)
	Nyanjagha Chota Bota
	Nyanjagha Zelu (son of Mpeti) (nephew)
	Nyanjagha Chizowe Bota
	Nyanjagha Chaipa Bota
	Nyanjagha Chenyentha (Salu)
	Nyanjagha Chafumilankhu (son of Kadongo (Phiri)) (nephew)
	Nyanjagha Vwalamukwamba (Katyetye).
Early August 1964:	
	Nyanjagha Davide Mukondo Mulindanyifwa Bota.
From September 1964:	
	Nyanjagha Chakujuma Mungomba Bota
	Nyanjagha Mateyo Lindiladongo (Katyetye)
	Nyanjagha January Chisulo (Katyetye).
From 1997 to 2002:	
	Nyanjagha Zachariah Chidosa Bota.
From 2000 to date:	
	Shadrick Mvula Nyifwayatose.

Of the Nyanjaghas above in the Chamanyavyose's chiefdom, Mulyawima, Zelu, and Chafumilankhu were nephews. Nyanjagha Davide Mukondo was killed during the Lenshina Uprising against the Zambian government on early August 1964.

MPHAMBA'S CHIEFDOM

Oral interviews carried out in 1974 by Kenwood Chavula sponsored by Professor Vail in Lundazi District, including the territory under Chief Mphamba, revealed important facts about the Tumbuka in this chiefdom. At an interview on 20 April 1974 at Mphamba Village, the chief and James Dokowe revealed that their ancestors came from Luba Kingdom and passed through southern Tanzania to Kalonga in Northern Malawi.[55] From Kalonga, they went westwards and southwards to Nkhamanga. Other separate interviews in the chiefdom confirmed what the chief and Dokowe revealed. They mentioned places like Nkhamanga, Kasitu, Mzimba, and Sukuma as lands of their ancestors.

As stated in other chapters, the Tumbuka were led by Mulonga Mbulalubilo from the Luba Kingdom, passing through southern Tanzania up to Kalonga, where he died in about 1430. The Tumbuka were in Kalonga District from about 1415 to 1435. On 1435 some of them began dispersing, but others remained at Kalonga and are still there today.

One of the two sons of Mbulalubilo was Kalonga wa Songwe, who left Kalonga, taking a southern direction. Kayazga was one of Kalonga wa Songwe's sons. However, Kayazga had only one child, Mukamanga. It was Mukamanga who had three sons, and one of them was Kaunga. This is

---

[55] Interviews by Kenwood Chavula covered Tumbuka chiefdoms in Malawi and Zambia in 1974 under the sponsorship of the late Professor Vail mentioned in chapter 1. Important people interviewed at that time included the following: Gideon Nyirenda, Matheza Village, Chief Mphamba, seventy years old, interviewed on 10 April 1974; Timoti Zimba, one hundred years old; and Chitisa Kumwenda, seventy-five years old, Njulu Village, Chief Mwase, Lundazi, on 11 May 1974; Chimbilima Kumwenda, sixty years old, Echilumbeni Village, Chief Magodi, on 8 May 1974; and Jubeni Ziba, one hundred five years old; and Petros Nyirenda, eighty-five years old, Gobede Village, Chief Mphamba, on 25 March 1974.

the one who started the Nyirenda clan. This clan is related to Nyanjagha Botawota, Longwe, and Kabondoma of the Nyirongo (Dokowe) clan.

In their migrations southwards, a number of the Nyirenda clans remained in the lands northwest of Nkhamanga. The rest went further south. It was this group of the Nyirenda clan that by 1520, when the M'nyanjagha Kingdom had reached its greatest extent under M'nyanjagha Kazanduka, settled in the territory from the present Lundazi District up to Bua River (Kasungu) in Malawi. This is what constituted Mphamba's chiefdom, one of the biggest chiefdoms in the Tumbuka Kingdom. See Map 4, Map 5, Map 8, and Figure 2. For more details, read chapter 2.

Chief Mphamba, a subking or subchief of M'nyanjagha, ruled his territory through his own subchiefs, including the Chigoma and Chagumuka clans. These two were under and reported to the Zimba clan that was the immediate subordinate of Chief Mphamba. When the Chewa were expanding northwards, they found the Tumbuka Kingdom. Among the Chewa chiefdoms that were established inside the southern parts of the Tumbuka Kingdom included Kapichila, Mwase Lundazi, Mwase Mphangwe, and Zumwanda.

There were many Tumbuka chiefdoms in the kingdom. However, not all of them are discussed in this book. Only the prominent ones that the informants could remember are discussed in this work. It is now an established fact that in the nineteenth century, the Ngoni 'colonised' the Tumbuka. In the south of the kingdom, the Ngoni only recognised one Tumbuka chiefdom under Chief Mphamba of the Nyirenda clan in 1880. This was done by the Ngoni aristocracy to avoid a repeat of the Baza Dokowe–organised rebellion against the Ngoni rule for not recognising an indigenous Tumbuka chief in Mzimba and Nkhamanga areas where they conquered and settled among the native Tumbuka.

The British South Africa Company (BSAC) that ruled colonial Zambia from 1890 to 1923 continued the status quo without interfering in the traditional practice of inheritance to political power in the existing chiefdoms. Thus, in 1918 Wajitundila Bandawe Nyirenda was installed chief Mphamba of the Tumbuka people with

the blessing of both the BSAC officials and the Ngoni chief (in the Tumbuka territory), Senior Chief Magodi.

Wajitundila Nyirenda reigned up to 1953 when the colonial government deposed him for being a *political militant* against the formation of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland.[56] Traditionally, the next in line to be the chief was Philemon Nyirenda. However, to the family's surprise, the colonial government rejected him on the grounds that he was illiterate.[57] The colonial government *imposed* as chief for the Tumbuka people in Mphamba's chiefdom a person who was non-Tumbuka and with no blood links to the royalty of the historical Nyirenda clan. That was the beginning of the conflicts created by the colonial government between two families fighting for the Mphamba chieftaincy. In 2002, the Mphamba administrative enquiry was appointed by the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) government to look into the Chief Mphamba problems, especially on the crucial issue of who should be the next legitimate Chief Mphamba. We hope that this 'simple' problem will be sorted out soon.

---

[56] The British colonial officials used this strategy of 'intimidation' throughout the country. Chiefs who were against the federation were deposed. Chief Bunda-Unda of the Soli is a good example. In fact, after 1965 even Chief Gawa Undi of the Chewa was severely threatened by the colonial government of being deposed if he did not cooperate with the colonial government. Also read chapter 3, 'African leadership under Indirect Rule in Colonial Zambia' in Samuel N. Chipungu (ed.), *Guardians in Their Time: Experiences of Zambians under Colonial Rule, 1890–1964* (London: Macmillan, 1992).

[57] This was another strategy by the colonial government to remove the illiterate chiefs and replace them with literate or educated Africans as chiefs. Whether or not they traditionally qualified as chiefs was not important for the colonial government. Also read chapter 3 of Chipugu (ed.), *Guardians in Their Time*.

KADONO'S (MOWA) CHIEFDOM

The Kadono group is descended from Mukamanga. Kaunga, also known as M'nyirenda, was one of the three sons of Mukamanga. Kaunga had two sons—namely, Kadono and M'nyihele. The Chamanyavyose group of the Tumbuka met the Tumbuka group of the Kadono near the lower Manthepa River at a place where Kajumba Village is today. The Kadono group had already established two villages north-east of upper Manthepa River. These were Tchili (also spelt Nchili) and Mowa. Their leader was Mowa. The Chamanyavyose group left the Mowa people at Tchili, and they continued southward along the edge of the mountain to where they finally settled on the Kamphemba River.

The Mowa people were expert basket-makers, using bamboo material. After exhausting the bamboos at Kawiya, they crossed the mountains westward to Tchili, looking for more and better bamboos. Their base was and still is at Mowa Village in the Vwaza area. Mowa Nyirenda (or M'nyirenda) of the Kadono or Mowa chieftaincy had four sons—namely, Mulandala, Chimuswela, Muchekacheka, and Chizenga. Mulandala married Nyazimba from Bambanda, and the wife gave birth to Kamalizga, Lupiya, and Duli II.[58] Lupiya married two wives—namely, Nyacha*w*inga (also spelt Nyacha*b*inga) and Nyamututa. Nyachawinga gave birth to Kamupalilo and Towela, his sister. Nyamututa gave birth to Fwilaulanda, Mordecai (Modikayi), Nyachirwa, and Lakelo Nyasiwalika.

Chimuswela married Nyakajawala from the Zimba clan (the Magaba), who bore him Thazama, Kanyuka, Nkangayimo, Mpiringo

---

[58] *Nya* is a prefix used in a surname for a woman. For example, a man can be Fumbamtima Chilembo, and a woman will be Wajisuzga Nyachilembo. *Nya* normally denotes that the name is for a woman. There are very few exceptions to this rule. For instance, teenager girls could give themselves *first* names (not surnames), such as Nyakilini, Nyazuwulanga, Nyamazawo, and so on. For more details, read the section 'A Note on the Tumbuka Names and Surnames' in this book.

(Mphiringo), Mpanga, and Mlowoka. Mpiringo married Nyakayuni, who bore him Simon Zude, Khalila, and Musitikana. Thazama married two wives, Nyaluhanga and Sentheka Nyachawinga. Nyachawinga bore him Chingayi. Nyaluhanga bore him Timoti (Tumeyo), Jacob (Yakhobe), and Philip (Filipo). Mpanga married two wives. His first wife bore him Zengazibili, and from the second wife, he had three children. These were Chandasika Nyazgovu (spelt Ndhlovu in Chi-Ngoni language) of the clan of the present Tchili; Yakhobe, who married Kanthu Nyabota, who bore him Haswell and Filipo. Filipo married Nyazunda, who bore him Edwin and Martin. After the death of Yakhobe, Filipo, the brother of Yakhobe, enherited Nyabota, who bore him two sons, Tenson and Macrean.

Zengazibili married Nyachawinga, and they had a son, Joseph. After the death of his young brother, Zengazibili inherited Chandasika Nyazgovu. Tumbuka traditions are such that only the young brother can inherit the elder brother's wife after he dies. Only if there is no young brother to marry the widow will the elder brother marry the widow of the young brother. This is so because the wife of the young brother always calls the elder brother of her husband as her father-in-law (*tatavyala*). This is why, among other reasons, it is still very difficult for the Tumbuka elder brother to inherit the wife of the deceased young brother.

Zengazibili and Chandasika Nyazgovu bore Msamba and Mtheto. The other name for Mlowoka was Chiwulukutu. He married and had three children, a daughter named Yimale (also known as Chowezga) and two sons, Matola and Kayima. The sons never stayed at Mowa. They went to stay with their maternal uncles at Kasito.[59]

Muchekacheka married Nyazgambo, and she bore him Jiwulungu and Mkalazi. Mkalazi's grandson was Mkalazi II (also known as Kasamula), who married Nyamunyimbili. Jiwulungu married Nyakandawile or Nyamkandawile (also spelt Nyamkanda*b*ile), who

[59] Much of the information on the Kadono came from among other informants: Glory Matutu Nyirenda, sixty-nine years old, interviewed on 14 December 1998 at Mowa Village, Zolokele, Chief Katumbi, Malawi.

bore Batemeyo, Zebedia, and Elija. Batemeyo married Nyamunthali, who gave birth to Patson (also known as Paliuli), Gibson Mzota, and Whitefathers Mpenge (Mphenge).

Jiwulungu married a second wife, Nyamunyimbili, and she bore him Yakhobe (Yobe). Yakhobe married Nyabota, who gave birth to Julius, Samson, Menard, Jaruwa, and Wilton. Muchekacheka had a grandson, Mahopola, who married Nyang'ona, a *Senga* from Luangwa Valley, who bore him a son, Syton. Kamalizga, son of Mulandala, had a wife who bore him Mbaba and Mtintila. Duli II got married and had two sons, the present Duli III and Katukulila. The latter built his home at Mbalakayila. His son was Gayo, who also had children named Jonasi, Dulani, and Abraham. Chizenga was the father of Fwangaluwilo, who married Nyagondwe, who bore Peter. Peter got married to two wives—namely, Nyachawinga, who bore him Folosaizi, and Nyamuseteka, who bore him Boyd.

Mowa's main village was near Kapili Rwanda (Rwanda hill). As population increased, some people left the village and settled at Tchili and Kajumba on the Manthepa River. Mowa's praise went like this: 'Yebo Nyirenda Kadono vilisinda kanyumba kamanthangala, komata kana vuche. Mukhokoko mukweni wa Leza, kapili nkababone mutu uli pa dambo, chalo ncha dada tose.' This is translated as: Thanks to the Nyirenda Kadono, they built a house with many small openings [windows]. The sealed one, without small openings, brings heat and sweat. Mukhokoko, a clever bird, is a son-in-law of lightning. A hill, let me see them, the head is at the river. The land is all for our father.

The territory under Mowa was quite big. His land bordered that of Nchuka and Kakoma to his north. From Kakoma, the boundary went straight up to the top of Rweyo hill. From this point, the boundary followed the hill up to Kalingamukabo (also spelt Kalingamukabu). Here, his territory bordered Kamphele Chondoka's territory (now part of Chama North, Zambia) in the middle Luwumbu valley, Sitwe area, up to Tchilighilo River, ending at the pool of Chiwungo. Ahead of this, Mowa's territory bordered Kajumba and at one time was under Tchili as part of Mowa's territory. But from the time of Zambia's political independence in 1964, Kajumba area in Zambia has been

on its own. From Kajumba, the boundary went along Kabulunje and Mukwela Kawili Mountains up to Manthepa River which it crossed and entered the mouth of Kasanya River. The boundary follows the river up to Zungwa Mountain. From there it passed along Chiskawa River up to Kalinku River, bordering a territory under Mungwalala, Chamanyavyose's senior subordinate. The boundary followed Kalinku up to the mouth of Mbalakayila River and followed it to its source, then went to Phalalanjati area where Mowa shares the territory with Kalindamawe. In Phalalanjati area, the boundary went to the north-eastern direction bordering with the Plateau (Mowa) Chondoka[60] then went to the northern side and ended up to the west and continued up to Chiwunda. On that side, Mowa bordered Mpande Kucha (Mphande Kucha), and the border went up to Kalupolozi at Katope, then straight to Kanthipa and Kapili Saili. There, Mowa bordered Luwungo and the boundary went up to Mazimbili and Kakoma then Rweyo hill where it started.

Mowa's chiefdom was led by the following chiefs before 1600: Seketela, Kanyuka, M'nyirenda (Nyirenda), Kazaza, and Chimuswela. Informants in the field stated that after Chimuswela, there were many other Mowa chiefs whose names the elders could not remember. However, between 1800 and 1880, two Mowa chiefs reigned—namely, Mulandala and Muchekacheka. When the Ngoni under Mombera (M'mbelwa) entered this area, it was Mowa Muchekacheka who was ruling the chiefdom. Many of his people were captured, including the members of the royal family. However, later on, the Ngoni released those who were subchiefs to Mowa and were allowed to continue ruling the people they had been ruling prior to the arrival of the Ngoni. After 1880 the following chiefs ruled the chiefdom: Lupiya, Jimu, and Fwilawulanda. From 1996 to date, Glory Matutu has been the chief.

---

[60] The Kamphele Chondoka named above is an offshoot of the Mowa Chondoka and are of the same clan.

The main headmen or village leaders found in Mowa's chiefdom are as follows:

1. Mwendazuba

His regalia is a black cloth on the head, and his area of control is from Zungwa hill to the source of Kalinku River and from Siyununu up to Kasanya.

Figure 11: Glory Matutu Nyirenda, Group Village Headman, Chief Mowa

2. Mpanga

His regalia is a black cloth round the waist, and he controls territory from Kawuwu to Chamukusa and from Chiwunda to Kawoyeka.

3. Gayo

His regalia is a black cloth round the waist, and he controls the area from Chomela River to Kalovya, Plateau (Mowa) Chondoka, Mbalakayila, and ends at the source of Kalinku River.

4. Kasamula

His regalia is a black cloth round the waist, and he controls the areas under Mazimbili and Mapala.

5. Mukanile

His regalia is a black cloth round the wrist, and he is a headman within Mwendazuba's village.

6. Chizenga

He does not wear any regalia. His area of control includes Kalulutila and Kathilamaunga up to Tangu.

7. Chivyandule

He does not wear any regalia. He is a headman within Kasamula's village.

8. Mbaba

He does not wear any regalia. He is a headman within Mpanga's village.

9. Mpalula (Kumwenda)

His regalia is a black cloth on the head, and he shares the boundary with Mpande kucha, Chondoka (Mowa), and Gayo.

KANYERERE

This is a group village headman sandwiched between Muyombe and Chamanyavyose territory. This is not part of Chief Mowa discussed above. The territory is part of the larger Kamphere (Chondoka) clan territory in the north-eastern edge of the Chamanyavyose's chiefdom. The first Kanyerere was known as Kalovya Bwangamutu Mututa. His

praise was: 'Ine pano Kalovya mitu ya Bantu Bwangamutu Mututa'. Some of the Kanyerere that informants could remember include the following: Mapangani, Kayaghazga, Fwangalubilo, Malibengwa, Manyeta, Hamba, Choganganya, Kawaka, Mateyo, Zebedia, and the current one, Gibson Komani Chondoka.

MWENEDOWOKO AND VINKHAKANIMBA

The Tumbuka oral traditions have revealed that on his way to the west (Kamphumbu area), Chamanyavyose left many other Tumbuka groups in the Nyika Plateau area. Among them were the Mwenedowoko Vyande or Kumwenda, who was with the Mukamanga and other clans such as the Luhanga, Mwandila, Chiwone, and Ngwira. Later, Mwenedowoko went westward to Vipampha Mountains and thereafter settled on Mitanga River. Mwenedowoko found the Gamba clan (the Munyenyembe) along Mitanga River. They lived together in harmony. The Ngambi clan (later called the Mbambara from Bamara gullies) also joined Mwenedowoko in the Mitanga area. However, Mwenedowoko directed the Ngambi clan to settle in the Masasi Mahowe mountains of his area.

The Bisa under Kalanga of the Mukonda clan came and joined Mwenedowoko. The other clans that came with him were the Ng'ona and the Bowa. They settled on the southern edge of the Masasi Mahowe mountains. Kalanga was also a spiritual leader who from time to time worshipped in the mountains and was an interceder between the people and spirits. Later, because of his prayers in the mountains, the mountains assumed the name Kalanga. Thus, three names of the same mountains appeared—namely, Kalanga, Masasi, and Mahowe.

On the upper part of the river, it developed high cliffs or banks, locally called *luwuku.* This is in Chi-Tumbuka and not in Chi-Bisa language. The river became known as Luwumbu, another Chi-Tumbuka name. In Chi-Bisa or Chi-Bemba languages, a river is called *libemba* or *mumana.* For this reason, the Bisa thought that the Tumbuka

erroneously pronounced *libemba* as *luwumbu*. The Bisa influence was so strong that what was Luwumbu River became Libemba at the source of the river in the Muyombe area, and the same river became known as Luwumbu River at the other end of the river in north Chamanyavyose area and up to the point where it enters Luangwa River. Thus, in the north-east, at the source of the river, the name Bemba (instead of Libemba) was popularised and remained up to this day, and the name Luwumbu (instead of Bemba) has also remained for the rest of the river up to this day.

Mwenedowoko Vyande or Kumwenda is independent of Mowa. His regalia is a black cloth on the head. The term *mwene* means 'the owner'. *Dowoko* means 'the harbour' or a 'safe crossing place'. Before 1600, settlements in some parts of the Tumbuka Kingdom were far apart. This made land travel unsafe for many people in the affected areas of the kingdom. For example, people moving from Mwavyavya Gamba area in Nthalire to Nchuka, Mpemba, and Chikontha had to use one safe main route that passed through the village of Mwenedowoko, the owner of the safe crossing point.

The term *vyande* means 'broken pieces of something such as gourd or clay pot'. Mwenedowoko paid tribute in ivory (elephant tusks) to Chief Kyungu (Chungu) in Kalonga. This was before the arrival into this territory of the Muyombe group of the Balowoka. The elephant tusks the Mwenedowoko people were taking to Kyungu as annual tribute were very big. They became difficult to carry. As a result, they were cut into smaller rings or pieces (hence the name vyande) and carried in that form to Kyungu. This is how Kumwenda or Mwenedowoko earned himself another name, Vyande.

Muyombe of the Muwowo ruling clan came into this area as Vinkhakanimba. He was a great elephant hunter. He married from the Banyenyembe family that was at Gamba Mountains. Shortly after the arrival of Muyombe, Mwenedowoko, the native Tumbuka chief in the area, also paid tribute to him in elephant tusks. He surrendered his political power as chief to the great elephant hunter, Muyombe Vinkhakanimba. Thereafter, Kumwenda's *praise* depicted the tributes he paid to Kyungu and later to Muyombe. It also shows how he lost

his political power to a stranger without shedding any blood. His praise was: 'Ine Kumwenda vyande vyaminyanga ya zovu na peleka kwa Muyombe na Kyungu.' This is translated as: I, Kumwenda, who gave the pieces of elephant tusks to Kyungu and Muyombe.

Eventually, the surname Kumwenda disappeared, and only Vyande remained. This is why he is currently known as Mwenedowoko Vyande.[61] Before the Muwowo ruling dynasty came into its present territory, the western part was for Chikontha, the south-east was for Nchuka, and the southern part was for Kanyerere, part of the Kamphele Chondoka clan. The central part, now under the Muyombe chiefs, was for Mwenedowoko Vyande Kumwenda.

In 1780, the great elephant hunter Vinkhakanimba came into the present Muyombe area, where he found the following Tumbuka headmen: Mwenedowoko, Mwenemasangani (also known as Mwenebambara), Kanyerere, Nchuka (of the Chilembo/Bangala clan), Chikontha, Mwenemavyavya, and Zumbe.[62] Vinkhakanimba first met the Mwenebambara people. These people were living in the mountain valleys and gullies, hence the name Bambara. They were originally from Chief Mwenechifungwe, and there they were known as the Ng'ambi. But when they came to this new area, they became known as the Bambara. Later they became known as the Mbambara.

Vinkhakanimba Muyombe recognised the presence of Mwenedowoko and wanted to pay tribute to him as his chief. But Mwenedowoko refused to be recognised as chief. Instead, he abdicated for the famous elephant hunter, Vinkhakanimba Muyombe. However, after

---

61 Details from the current Mwenedowoko headman, Ranwell Vyande Kumwenda, fifty-eight years old, Mwenedowoko Village, Chief Muyombe, interviewed on 11 December 1998. Also from interviews with Headman Mwenezako, Evanson Muwowo, sixty-nine years old, interviewed at Mwenezako Village, Chief Muyombe, on the day of Vinkhakanimba ceremony in 1998.

62 The date 1780 comes from P. M. Mukuka, National Archives of Zambia, *Calendars of the District Notebooks (Northern Province 1862–1963)*, vol. 2 (Lusaka: Government Printer, 1966), pp. 25, 30, 35, 190, 213, and 215.

Mwenedowoko's members of the royal family accepted Vinkhakanimba Muyombe as their chief, it was Mwenedowoko who had the noble but 'painful' responsibility of actually crowning him as chief. This has continued up to this day. When there is a problem in the chiefdom, Chief Muyombe calls upon Mwenedowoko for advice. The present chief Muyombe is Elewell Chinkuku Muwowo. On enthronement, he named himself as the Musungambumba (the one who takes care of his people), a name that will last up to the end of his regime.

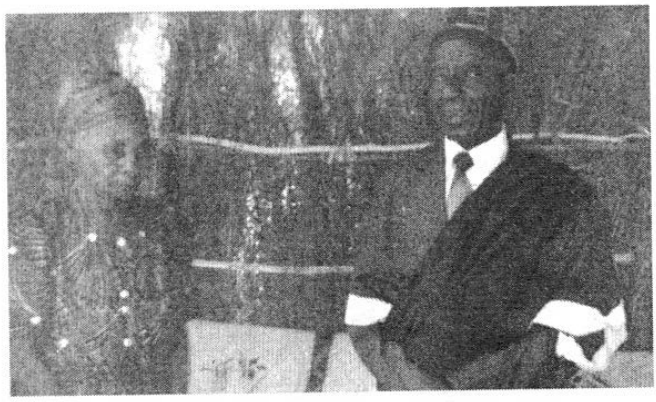


Figure 12: Chief Muyombe with his wife during the 1998 Vinkhakanimba ceremony

In his territorial expansion, Muyombe used his brother, the headman Katanga, to successfully remove the Tumbuka headman Kanyerere from Mpalasa. Kanyerere was forced to cross the Chiri River and remained on its south bank where he also remained a neighbour of Chibulukutu and Nchuka. His royal burial place was at Vikong'onthelo after the present Katanga School.[63] Kanyerere was also known by the names Kalovya Bantu, Bwangamutu, Mtuta (Mututa), and Chondoka.

[63] Details of how Muyombe occupied Kanyerere's territory are from interviews with the Kanyerere headman, Gibson Chondoka, at Kanyerere Village, Chief Kambombo, November 1998.

KATONGOMALA PA KATUNGAMBIZI'S CHIEFDOM

Katongomala (also spelt Kathongomala) built his village near Mbalachanda hill on the western part of South Lukuru River. He was given the chieftaincy by his father, Chiti Thambalika, with the blessings of the king or M'nyanjagha. He left his father's area on the eastern part of the same river. After many years at Mbalachanda hill, he shifted his village to Luwonekela hill. Today, the Lundazi–Chama road passes through Luwonekela hill. The hill marked the boundary with Chamanyavyose, his brother, who occupied the Luangwa Valley. Katongomala Chikuske, probably the grandson of Katongomala Pa Katungambizi, built a fort at Luwonekela hill. The Ngoni found him as chief in this area, and they destroyed his fort at Luwonekela and captured many of his people.

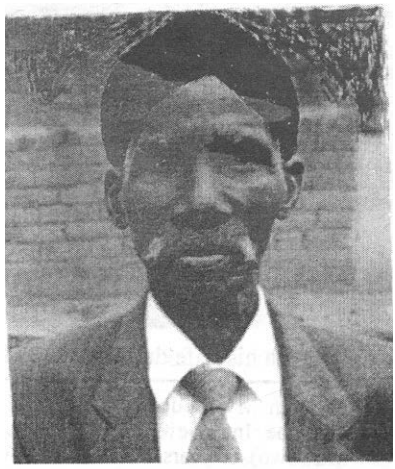


Figure 13: Nelson Chizamuluwa Bota, Nyanjagha Mufipa Katongomala pa Katungambizi

The following is a list of the Katongomala Pa Katungambizi Bota chiefs who have ruled.

From about 1700 to 1956:

Chimumphangala Bota
(son of Chiti Thambalika)

Chikuske Bota (son)
Kasolwe Bota (son)
Muzgeba Bota (son)
Chiyangile Bota (brother)
Kaphika Bota (son)
Goba Zimba (nephew).

From 1956 to 2002:

Chizamuluwa Nelson Bota (son).

The praise for Katongomala Pa Katungambizi chieftaincy was and still is: 'Botawota Nyanjagha Katongomala Pa Katungambizi zakazaka muchila wa nyumbu chibinimbi wakazenga pachanya chakwa leza. Salu ya mukatundu ya mukaselo njamukamwana. Bota Chamanyeta chama khoza chikasweka bene Katongomala. Wakatongomala Pa katungambizi, chilindila wakalindila mukoko pa mutu.' In English, it goes like this: Botawota Nyanjagha Katongomala pa Katungambizi, shaking like the tail of the wildebeest, *chibinimbi*, building on top of the house, like the lightning. A cloth in a piece of luggage, in a winnower is for the daughter-in-law. Bota Chamanyeta, the one with the bangle that got broken, squatted on carpet grass, the one who waited and waited just to be hit with a club on his head.

The headmen in the Katongomala Pa Katungambizi chiefdom included the following: Chimumphangala, Chiyangile, Chikuske, Kasolwe, Timoti, Chiliuli, Mulwangwa, Chuzu, Chikoma, Chikozola, Mudikila, Vwawe, Bayani, Peter, Jeremiah, Mbuzi, Sonko, Munduwi, Robert, Gowa, Kapela, and Mwendakuzulu Bota (but now known as Kumwenda). Due to previous boundary changes and certain factors beyond the scope of this chapter, Mwendakuzulu Bota, together with his subjects, ended up being under Chamanyavyose in Zambia.

The first Mwendakuzulu was Chivundiko Bota. He was followed by Suwila Kumwenda, Kamphanamba Gamba M'nyenyembe, Sizala Kumwenda, Rabson (Zunda) Musangu, and James Kumwenda. The current Mwendakuzulu is Davison Kumwenda. These are Kumwendas, but their praise is that of the Botas, the original owners of the village. They praise them as: 'Yebo Bota Musiwila'. This is the

same with the Chiyunga, who are the Mkandabile. Their praise is 'Yebo Bota', the original owners of the area or chiefdom.[64]

JALILA'S CHIEFDOM

Longwe, the first M'nyanjagha, had many children. One of them was Jalila, who was given part of the kingdom to control. His territory's headquarters were at Chanyoli, a place that was also the royal burial grounds for the kingdom. Jalila (the frontier, the hedge), also known as Jalila Bantu Malo (block intruders), was given a specific task of stopping strangers from encroaching on the kingdom. His praise was: 'Botawota Nyanjagha Kakunde muteuka akateuka palingala tolowazilo chiuno cha tonga aka sungunuka nga mafuta ya skaba. Aka kanda njoka yikafwa malunga. Aka kanda mulangali ukawa.' This is translated as: Botawota, the one who crossed Songwe River on a string. Tolowazilo, the waist of the Tongas, melted like groundnuts oil. He stepped on a snake, and it failed to move; he stepped on a Mulangati tree, and it fell down.

The following is a list of the *Jalila chiefs* since the first Jalila in about 1700:

Jalila Bantu Malo
Chiyombo
Limbana na Banangwa
Katawa wa Jiso limo
Chitowelo
Kajunde
Dofu
Mawele
Chimukwau
Chimbizgani
Thomu (Thomas)

---

64 Most of the information on Katongomala came from Kadoda Nyirenda, sixty years old. He was interviewed at Chamaliwa School, Chief Chindi, Malawi.

Nowa (Noah)
Amosi
Tadeyo
John Chawelelachi (the current Jalila).[65]

CHITE CHAMBULA BANA'S CHIEFDOM

Chite Chambula Bana (the lame and without children) originally settled in an area on the eastern side of South Lukulu River.[66] Almost all the area under the current Ngoni chief Chindi was his. The Ngoni removed Chite from South Lukulu River. Chite's territory shared the same border with the territories under headmen Kalovya, Buli, Chuzu, Kapela, and Mbuzi. Kalovya's boundary was Lukumbuzi River, Buli's boundary was Lupamazi River, Chuzu's boundary was Chankhalamu River, Kapela's boundary was Vitolotolo River, and Mbuzi's boundary was Lwasosa River.

Chite's real name is not known, and our informants in the field could not remember it either. However, they were quick to remember the nickname he gave himself: Chite (the lame). He wanted to have a son in his lifetime, but he never had one. This situation made him conclude that his 'unfortunate' position of not being able to have a son after several years of repeated trials with his spouse was because he was lame. Chite was not physically disabled. This was just an excuse he created to console himself for having only daughters. Later, his name was changed to Chiti instead of Chite Chambula Bana.

---

[65] Details on this chieftaincy came mainly from Frackson Zanda Mkandabile, fifty years old. He was interviewed at Zanda Village, between Jalila and Chikwawa in Rumphi, Malawi, on October 1998.

[66] For the information on the Chiti Chiefdom, we are thankful to Maxon Nyongo, seventy-two years old, who was interviewed on 7 August 1998 at Luvwanga Village, Chief Chindi, Malawi, and also to Kadoda Nyirenda, sixty years old, who was interviewed at Chamaliwa School, Chief Chindi, Malawi.

Only two daughters of Chiti are remembered. These are Nthiba and Zawinja, the younger sister. Nthiba was married to a fellow Bota from Chiyunga's family in order for the Botas to take over the chieftaincy after the chief's death. This family had two sons, Chimupeni and, the younger brother, Thambalika. Chimupeni's sons were Makaikila (Makaika) and Lukundanya, while Zawinja's son was Katundula, the father of Filipo. Lukundanya had a sister who had a son, Musokwa. The present Chiti is Saulosi, the great-great-grandson of Chiti Lukundanya. This time, he is very old, and Lyson is acting as Chief Chiti.

The following is a list of rulers of this chiefdom:

From 1700 to 2001:	Chiti (Chite)
	Chimupeni (nephew)
	Thambalika (nephew)
	Makaikila (son)
	Lukundanya (son)
	Katandula (nephew) (Zimba)
	Musokwa (nephew) (Nyongo)
	Philipo (nephew) (Zimba)
	Saulosi (2002) (grandson) (Bota)

Chiti's praise was and still is: 'Chiti chilikunanga jopilo kavunga Botawota Nyanjagha Mbulalubilo'. Translated as: Chiti, who spoiled the insects' house, Botawota Nyanjagha Mbulalubilo. Chiti's headmen were as follows: Makaika, Chihame, Lukundanya, Chibumila, Chakulota, Chimwamutaba, Luvwanga, Mukakaska, Jeremiah, Nyifwayatose, Nkhosana, Chimukusa, Mubama, Kambwili, and Musokwa.

Important clans that Chiti and Katongomala used to visit very frequently were Kasalu (also known as Kaimbonye), Nyirenda (the Malandula and Mphamba group of the Tumbuka chieftaincies) and Kholopete (also known as Zimba), north of Mphamba. As stated earlier on, the Ngoni destroyed Chiti's area and forced him to cross to the western bank of South Lukulu River. Chiti left two villages on the eastern side of the rivers Ching'anya and Vavera. He settled at Kalovya, far from South Lukulu River, where he built a fort named Lubangula. After some time, he moved back to an area close to South Lukulu River.

LONGWE'S CHIEFDOM IN LUNDAZI DISTRICT

The history of Chief Longwe in Lundazi District is very interesting. The one who created the chiefdom was a Tumbuka man called Mwambale of the Mwaphoka Mwachidika Mwambale clan and son of a chief in Usiska, the northern part of the Tumbuka Kingdom. He left Usiska due to some serious family problems that endangered his life. With his family supporters, he came to an area between Kasito and Luangwa rivers, where M'nyanjagha lived. The M'nyanjagha accepted Mwambale and allowed him to settle in the area for a short time.

The tradition among the Tumbuka was that if a person comes to the king's territory to settle, the king will officially accept the new person by performing a ritual of sprinkling millet meal (later, mealie meal) on his or her head. After that, he or she is given a new name by the king. This is exactly what happened to Mwambale who settled in M'nyanjagha's area. After the sprinkling ritual, Mwambale was renamed Longwe. This was the name of the first M'nyanjagha of the Tumbuka Kingdom. It was, therefore, a great honour for Mwambale to be renamed by this name. The name Mbale became more common than Mwambale, and the clan was eventually also known as the Mbale clan.

After being blessed by the M'nyanjagha, Longwe Mbale was told to go and start his own chiefdom on the south-west of the kingdom. M'nyanjagha instructed Chief Chite Chambula Bana (Chiti) to share his vast territory with Longwe Mbale. Indeed, Chief Chiti shared his

land with him. In his new chiefdom, Longwe Mbale had the following subchiefs: Malandura Nyirenda, Kholopete Zimba, and Kayimbonye Kasaru. His palaces were at Bewu and Katete near Chasefu Mission Station in the present territory of Senior Chief Magodi. This is how the Longwe's chiefdom in Lundazi District *was created* a long time ago with the help of the M'nyanjagha. Note that besides the Longwe in Lundazi district, as explained in the paragraphs above, there are two other Longwe chiefs in Kathibi (Mzimba).

The Longwe chief of Lundazi District *was* praised in this way: 'You are Longwe Mwambale, a seed from Mbulalubilo. Your leader came from Luba Kikonja. You stayed in the land of Misiska (Usiska). Things did not favour you. Chiti came with you at Manda Hill and showed you vast land where the Mwanionelankhu [the Saan] were leaving. You chose Bewu and Katete. You stayed with your relatives Kholopete, Malandura, Kayimbonye and others. One day you were following elephants' foot marks, and suddenly you found Mphamba Nyirenda with his wives and people. You identified them that they were the Nyanjaghas as well.

CHIYUNGA'S CHIEFDOM

Kazanduka, Longwe's son, had a son known as Katumbikika. He was normally called Katumbi, a short version of Katumbikika.[67] Nobody knows why such a name was given to his son. When Kazanduka died, Katumbikika took over as the fifth M'nyanjagha. However, from the time Kazanduka died and before Katumbikika took over as M'nyanjagha, there were two cousins of Katumbikika who became chiefs within the Katumbikika's chiefdom. Katumbikika had two sons—namely, Malikiti, who was a professional hunter, and Mitawata, who was a farmer and did much fishing in South Lukulu River and

[67] On the Chiyunga Chieftaincy, the following provided useful data: Taida Luhanga, ninety-two years old, interviewed on 15 August 1998 at M'nyanjagha Village, Chief Mperembe, Malawi, and Yafet Zgambo, ninety-four years old, interviewed on November 2000 at House Number 149, near SDA Church in Kabwata, Lusaka, Zambia.

Zaro marsh. As a hunter, Malikiti was most of the time away from home, sometimes for many weeks or months, killing animals, drying their skins and meat.

When M'nyanjagha Katumbikika died, the elders (Kapemba, Katongomala, and Kapole) chose Malikiti to be the next king. But the day when he was to be enthroned as the M'nyanjagha, Malikiti was not at home. He was, as usual, away hunting in the Bambanda valley. However, that time he had unusually overstayed in the bush, and people thought that he was dead, killed by the animals. Since they were not sure, they put the crown on his door so that on arrival, he would know that he was the next king replacing the dead one, his father. He was the firstborn in the Katumbikika family. Later, they crowned his wife, but still more, Malikiti did not show up.

Having lost hope of Malikiti ever coming back, the people crowned his young brother, Mitawata, as king. A short time thereafter, Malikiti arrived from his longest hunting expedition. The people in the area did not know what to do. Immediately, Kapemba, who was living at Bululuji after the Wila plains, was informed of the development. Kapemba summoned his traditional brothers—namely, Katongomala, Chiti, Chamanyavyose, Jalila, and Mgwela—to solve this problem. In their discussion, Jalila advised that Mitawata should not be removed from the throne because he was enthroned in accordance with the rules of the Tumbuka tradition, correctly and in good faith. Jalila went on to say, 'If he is removed by people who put him there, it means that his great-grandchildren will never be kings or chiefs of this land.' They all agreed with Jalila.

Malikiti was told of all that happened leading to the crowning of his younger brother. He did not respond. He just kept quiet, and he was neither happy nor angry. Because of this situation, it was finally decided that Malikiti be given his own chieftaincy to rule. He was given an area in the territory he liked most, namely Bambanda, where he always went hunting. From that time, his name and that of his village was Chiyunga na Mapili (moving along with the mountains). He became Chief Chiyunga, a chieftainship that never existed before but was created to solve the succession problems just explained. With

a number of people and headmen, he settled in his newly created chieftaincy. He built a village south of his chiefdom and named it Milulu. Later, he changed the name to Wombwe.

The first Wombwe was Chihomaniche, son of M'nyanjagha Mitawata. During the British colonial rule, this area was part of a large piece of land that was declared a game management area. All the people who were living here before the declaration were moved to either Chamanyavyose's chiefdom in the present Chama District in Zambia (Northern Rhodesia) or to chiefdoms in Northern Malawi (Nyasaland). The villages that were affected and thereafter quickly shifted into Zambia included Mwendakuzulu (discussed above), Selemani, Wombwe (Milulu), Bambanda, Chagolombala at Homani, Kalindamawe, Chizenga (one of Mowa's villages), Luwungo, Nchuka, Chavunikila, Munyolowanda, Kanyerere, Munyakatwa, Zondola, Mwachizizi, and Sanjari. However, Wombwe became reorganised and shifted to one of the chiefdoms in Northern Malawi (Nyasaland). At one time, the Kachali family, the traditional cousins of the M'nyanjagha, headed the village.

The first Chiyunga was Malikiti. The second one was Vuzga (also commonly known as Chitukula), who in his old age also became M'nyanjagha. This was because Chibanjala (the rightful heir) was young and was away with his mother somewhere near Lake Malawi. The Chiyunga's chiefdom had the following chiefs in descending order: Chiyunga Mumapili (Malikiti, son of Katumbikika); Chitukula (son); Mawe (son); Malenje (brother); Dwadwa (brother); Hulwa (nephew); Vunjamo, the son of Timale (nephew); Galadeni, grandson of Nyanje; Kumbukani, grandson of Nyanje; Kennedy, grandson of Nyanje; and the current one (2002), Watson Mhinji, is also a grandson of Nyanje.

Most Tumbuka chiefs have come from the Botawota clan (commonly known as Bota). However, this time, in the Chiyunga's chiefdom, those who became chiefs were the matrilinear cousins from the Mkandabire family. At one time, there was a Zimba (Vunjamo). However, even if the Mkandabiles have taken the throne, they do not use the Mkandabile praise name. They use the original Nyanjagha

Botawota praise name: Yebo Bota Nyanjagha. The Mkandabiles do not complain because they sincerely know the history of the origin of the praise name for this chieftainship. The headmen found in Chiyunga's chiefdom include the following: Kaphakalamata (or Kachali), Chiphaku, Mawe, Mugumba, Wombwe, Chitukula, Chipoka, Kaweyu and Mutunga (the Bota clan), Zoli, Fiya, Chizembe, Chapyoka, Mpita (the Mkandabile clan), Selemani, and Munyakanyaka (the Zimba clan).

CHAPTER FOUR

THE RISE AND GROWTH OF THE TUMBUKA KINGDOM

The Tumbuka have a unitary origin with one leader who came with them from the Luba Kingdom to Kalonga. According to oral traditions, after their leader, Mbulalubilo Mulonga, died at Kalonga, there were no succession disputes. The oral traditions are silent on the leader who succeeded Mulonga at Kalonga. But what we know for certain is that Mulonga's two sons left Kalonga with their supporters. Kalonga wa Nkonde, the elder, went west of Kalonga. The younger brother, Kalonga wa Songwe, went south of Kalonga. They created several chiefdoms deep in the interior. Not all the Tumbuka left Kalonga. Some remained there. Their new leader is not known. The traditions are also silent on the new leader for the people that remained at Kalonga.

Competition for land leading to conflicts or disputes over land have not been recorded in oral sources or archival sources on the Tumbuka. This is because land was plentiful and people could acquire as much as they could use it. The leaders who led their people from Kalonga were capable leaders who continued Mulonga's good leadership skills. They promoted unity and encouraged food production to avoid hunger and famine. They settled in fertile river valleys, where they grew many crops, using locally manufactured hoes. The Tumbuka were excellent at producing iron tools from iron ore that was abundant in their territory.

In the early sixteenth century, the Tumbuka chiefs from Songwe's and Nkonde's groups voluntarily saw the need for an overall leader to preside over their affairs, as was the case during the era of Mbulalubilo Mulonga. They happily chose Longwe as their first M'nyanjagha (king). Counting from Mbulalubilo Mulonga, Longwe was the second king of the Tumbuka. But counting the kings in the newly created kingdom, Longwe was the first M'nyanjagha. The voluntary choice of a king greatly enhanced the Tumbuka's political unity and eventually helped them to extend political boundaries. Starting with Longwe, the territorial expansion was completed by the second M'nyanjagha, Kazanduka. As stated earlier, the kingdom stretched from Songwe River in the north (border with Tanzania and Malawi) to Bua River in the south (now Malawi). On the east, the kingdom extended to the Tonga, an ethnic group living west of Lake Malawi. Westwards, the kingdom stretched to Luangwa River. The expansion of the kingdom was not by military campaigns but by peaceful means. First, the Tumbuka coexisted with the Saan they found in the territory. Gradually, the Saan left the land, preferring to go westwards where they could be on their own. They ended up settling in the Namib and Kalahari deserts in Namibia and Botswana respectively. This is where they can still be found today. The land they abandoned was easily and quickly occupied by the Tumbuka.

Tributes from the headmen, chiefs, and subchiefs to the king enhanced loyalty and unity in the kingdom. Such tributes were distributed to the chiefdoms, depending on the need for such goods. Some of them were used for those who came to the centre for the Mabazgo ceremony. Local community public works, such as the building of bridges and clearing of the roads, improved the communication infrastructure in the kingdom and enhanced economic development.

The growth of the Tumbuka Kingdom is also attributed to the absence of ethnic wars or wars with invaders. Oral traditions mention no wars with neighbours except for an invasion by the Bemba in the mid nineteenth century that only affected the northern portion of the kingdom. The newcomers who entered the kingdom in the nineteenth century or earlier did so peacefully. Such newcomers include the Chewa on the southern edge of the kingdom, the Senga (Biza by

origin) on the western side of the kingdom, and the Balowoka traders from the east that settled mainly in the Rumphi District. It was only the Ngoni who came as 'violent newcomers' in the 1850s, destroying property and lives. However, by then the vibrant Tumbuka Kingdom of the M'nyanjagha had already crumbled.

Agriculture and trade were important factors in the economic growth of the kingdom. Oral sources speak of the territory receiving plenty of rainfall and that as a result there were many perennial rivers and streams. The traditions have also revealed of people growing plenty of crops and that the territory knew no famine until the twentieth century. The abundant food supply guaranteed food security. Initially, surplus food was sold on barter system locally. However, later on, surplus food was sold to regional traders. Such traders came into the kingdom from all corners of the territory. Trade was in many items, but from the nineteenth century, ivory and slaves were the two most important items of trade. The Luangwa Valley was and still is an important sanctuary for wildlife, especially elephants, from which ivory was obtained. Trade opened up the kingdom to the outside world, and in the end, it became a factor that quickened the demise of the kingdom.

CHAPTER FIVE

ECONOMY AND SOCIETY BEFORE 1900

This is an attempt to discuss in an exploratory manner the economic history of the Tumbuka before 1900. According to records left by early Europeans who lived or passed through the Tumbuka territory, this land had abundant rainfall, rich natural vegetation, and many perennial rivers and streams.[68] Most of the rainfall was due to the geographical conditions of the area: much of the Tumbuka land is on high plateau and has many hills and mountains that induce relief or orographic rainfall. Because of the high rainfall received in the kingdom, many rivers broke their banks during the rainy season and created serious floods in the valleys. The valleys were and still are quite fertile areas because of the silt from the higher areas carried down or brought in by the annual floods. The plateau areas also have good soils that support crop production. High rainfall led to the growth of thick broad-leafed woodlands, especially in the northern areas, while the woodland proper covered much of the southern territory. Animal life was abundant and included elephants, rhinos, buffaloes, lions, hippopotamuses, and small game. Major rivers controlling the drainage system in the kingdom include: Luangwa River and its many perennial tributaries (such as Luwumbu River, one of the major tributaries of the Luangwa River), Kasitu, South Rukuru, Dwambazi, Mzimba, and

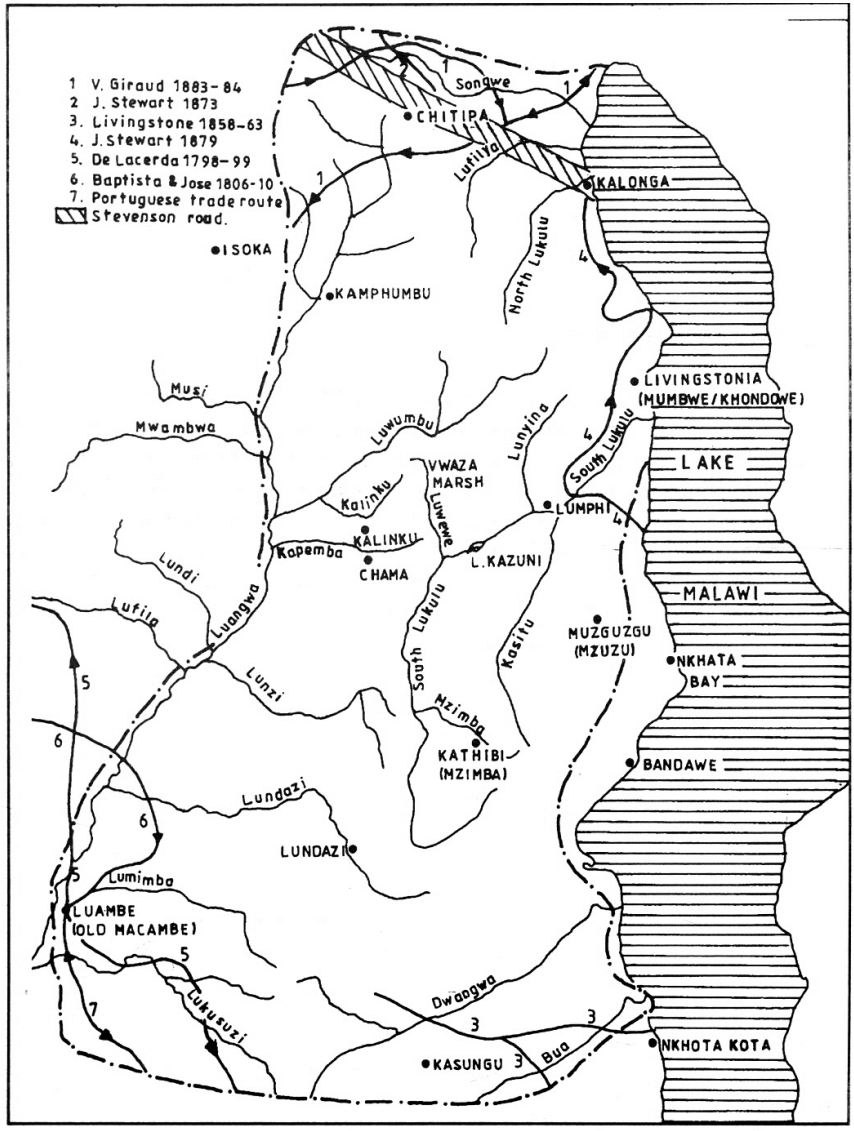
[68] See Map 6, European explorers in the Tumbuka Kingdom by 1884.

Dwangwa rivers. Various species of fish are in abundance in these rivers. Many rivers in the northern Tumbuka territory drain their water into Lake Malawi to the east. Rivers on the western edge of Tumbuka territory drain their water into the Luangwa River to the west.

The economic activities of the Tumbuka fall in four parts—namely, agriculture, hunting, gathering and collecting, and trading (mostly through barter). Mining was a very specialised venture and was carried out in few specific areas that had mineral deposits.

AGRICULTURE

Environment, especially soils and vegetation type, greatly influenced the kind of agriculture followed by the Tumbuka in different parts of their kingdom. Before the invention of iron-smelting technology became *widely* spread in the territory, for a very short time, a very small proportion of the Tumbuka used wooden hoes known as *gobo* and made from the heart of very hard trees like *mphangala* and *mukwa*. With the passage of time, the Tumbuka quickly discovered the knowledge of iron-working or learned the skills of smelting iron ore from the Saan



Map 6. European Explorers in the Tumbuka Kingdom by 1834

they found inhabiting the territory they came to occupy and made iron hoes and other farm implements. Initially, the Tumbuka people practised only arable farming. This is because most of them were originally not cattle-keepers.

The culture of rearing cattle was introduced in their society much later by cattle they got from the Nkonde people, a segment of the Kalonga wa Nkonde Tumbuka to the north that borders with the present Tanzania. Only after the introduction of the cattle from the north did many Tumbuka practise mixed farming. Pastoral farmers concentrated on cattle-keeping and rearing of goats. Because of tsetse flies in some parts of the kingdom, especially in the valleys, pastoralism was abandoned in the affected areas, and people concentrated on arable farming.

Crop production involved growing of three staple crops—millet, both bulrush (*Pennistum typhoideum*) and finger-type (*Eleusine coracana*), though the former was not very common; red varieties of *Sorghum* spp., and *Sorghum vulgare* known as *dhura* in North Africa. Before 1860, the Tumbuka were not growing maize. This crop was only introduced in the present north-eastern Zambia from 1860, most likely with seeds smuggled or bought in from Bemba. Red rice (*Oryza sativa*), an indigenous crop, had been in cultivation long before the introduction of the white rice by the Arabs. Cotton was harvested from the cotton bush that grew wild in their area. They also grew crops like beans, groundnuts, ground beans, sweet potatoes, and vegetables. Crops were grown mainly in the numerous river valleys.

They did not practise the *chitemene* system of agriculture of their western neighbours, the Bemba. This is when branches of trees are cut down and heaped in one place and later burnt. Crops are cultivated in the many areas where the branches were burnt. The Tumbuka had two distinct seasonal areas where they cultivated crops. During the rainy season, they cultivated *rain season crops* in higher grounds, not in river valleys, because floods destroyed crops grown in these areas. From the months of May (Vuna) to August (Mpupulu), in suitable areas, they cultivated *dry season crops* in the silt-fertilised river valleys. This system, locally called *nyata* is still practised by many people today in some

areas. Good examples are the nyata fields in Luangwa and Luwumbu river valleys. During famine, people collected foods from the forests. Such foods included *nchenja*, *nkhazi-kazi*, *nchenche*, wild millet, and *muzimbwe* (which is similar to rice but with tiny seeds). Normally, muzimbwe grows in river valleys. Njowela and numbu were other wild tubers that people dug up and ate. Numbu (like a carrot, but white) could be eaten fresh, uncooked, or cooked.

Gongwe (upstairs house) were raised structures with sleeping facilities about six metres above the ground. They were built from very strong, hard trees like mukwa, *m'pani*, and m'phangala. A permanently fixed ladder to the gongwe assisted them to climb up into the bedroom. Such houses were built around the gardens so villagers could guard against the animals trying to enter the fields to eat crops. From the gongwe, it was easy to see animals coming to the field, and they immediately began chasing them before they reached the field. This was done mainly at night. At daybreak, the 'night crop guards' went back to the village to rest. The gongwe was also used during the day as a point from which the 'daytime crop guards' threw stones at birds in order to chase them from the field, particularly chasing them away from fields of cereal crops, like millet, sorghum, and rice.

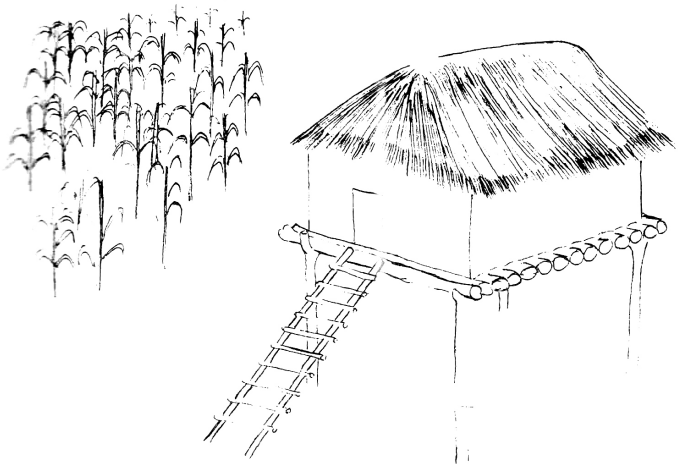


Figure 14: A Gongwe

HUNTING

The Tumbuka were by tradition great hunters. Oral traditions say that they learned the art of hunting from the Saan. Hunting was either for their daily protein requirement or in order to barter the meat for items not available in their local areas. In the long run, hunting became so important that it created a stratum in the society comprising the specialist hunters (*fundi* or *chibinda*). Such people were well respected and quite influential in their respective communities. Many of them had acquired or declared certain areas as their specific hunting grounds on which no other hunters could trespass.

The thick woodlands of their country that is dotted with valleys provided natural sanctuary for many species of wildlife. To hunt animals, people had to make weapons. Quantity and quality of weapons depended on both the availability of raw materials to make such weapons and on the local skilled human resource to produce the required weapons. The following were the most common weapons used in their hunting expeditions: nets, *mahomwa* (large axes in the form of hoes, with a very sharp wide blade), spears (with or without poison), axes, snares, clubs, sticks, dogs, trap pits, fire, and bow and arrows (with or without poison), which is the *main traditional Tumbuka weapon*. They also used a sticky substance obtained after treating and processing tree sap from the *chitonto* tree. The finished product was widely known as *ulimbo* and was used mainly for catching grain-eating birds in the grain fields. It was also common practice among the Tumbuka to undertake group-hunting, locally known as *chisokole.* They utilised dogs on a large scale in such sessions. However, many professional hunters, (chibindas or fundis*)* worked individually, using family or hired labour.

Animal skins were used in the manufacturing of waist belts, pouches, skin bags, dresses, blankets, and so on. However, skins from animals like leopards and lions were sacred items used only by clan leaders, elders, headmen, chiefs, subkings, and the king. The same was true for the tail of the wildebeest that was used in the preparation of a fly switch for the king only.

FISHING

Rivers were the sources of fish for people living nearby. Spears, hooks and lines, locally made scooping nets (*njelo*), poisoning of water in a specific part of a river in order to kill the fish, and *chono* (a special type of fish trap) were some of the effective methods of killing fish in the Tumbuka society. Fishing was a leisure time activity done by both women and men in the society. It could be done individually or by using family labour. It could also be undertaken collectively by men alone or women alone or boys and girls together. The use of special fishing baskets was a common feature among fisherwomen. The fish commonly found in the rivers included: breams, kapenta (finger-sized white fish, locally known as *nthubi* or *lusipa*), bubble fish, bottle fish, tiger fish, mudsuckers, and various small and big white fish. Preservation of fish was done by smoking (fire-drying) it or drying it in the sun on raised platforms. There was much local and regional trade in dried fish.

GATHERING AND COLLECTING

Gathering and collecting of food from the local environment is probably the oldest human economic activity on earth. It emerged long before agriculture was known to human beings. The Stone Age societies depended on it for their survival. The Iron Age groups also heavily relied on it. Good examples of people still practising this activity are the *Saan*, who currently inhabit Namib and Kalahari deserts in Namibia and Botswana respectively; the Khoikhoi in the Cape Province of South Africa; and the various small ethnic groups collectively (though erroneously known as the *Pygmies*) that inhabit the Democratic Republic of Congo's equatorial rainforests.

Gathering and collecting as a form of economic activity depended wholly on nature. What the environment provided is what was collected from it. Thus, this activity took place throughout the year, collecting different food items provided by the environment at different seasons in a year. Like elsewhere in precolonial Zambia, the

Tumbuka were actively engaged in collecting and gathering what their environment offered at different times of the year. In fact, the oral traditions of the Tumbuka have revealed that they found the Saan in the territory that they later inhabited. It is quite possible that, together with the Saan, they gathered and collected food items from their environment.

The usual time for growing crops was and still is the rainy season, between November (Thukila) and April (Masika). Between December (Vula) and February (Muswela), crops were in the fields, not yet ready to be harvested. That was a crucial period of relatively less food in the kingdom. It was for this reason that, at that time, collecting and gathering was very important to supplement shortfalls in food supplies. The following items were collected and gathered by the Tumbuka from their territory annually between November and February: caterpillars, mushrooms, flying ants, and crickets. However, various fruits, roots, pulses, vegetables, insects, and honey could be gathered throughout the year. Red locusts (*zombe*) were periodically collected in some parts of the territory. It must be noted that differences in the environment led to differences in soil types, vegetation types, and tree species. What this meant was that within the vast kingdom, not all the areas offered the same items at the same time to be gathered. Consequently, one area could offer an item that was not found in the other area, hence the emergence of trade in order to obtain items that were not found in the local environments.

Within each environment, there were certain medicinal species of trees useful in the production of various medicines. As a result, there emerged a number of medicine men and medicine women commonly known as ng'anga, who did not only become specialists in identifying medicinal species of trees but also applied such medicine to treat the sick in society. Consequently, their position in society was elevated and could only be equated to the same position now being enjoyed by *modern* medical doctors in our society.

One other important by-product of collecting and gathering was arrow poison (*ulembe*). It was prepared by mixing sap from the ulembe tree and other substances, including one locally called *usitwe*. The

Luangwa Valley had plenty of ulembe trees; hence, much of the arrow poison sold in the Tumbuka Kingdom came from this area under the subking Chamanyavyose. It was mainly used for killing animals, especially the big animals, such as hippos, elephants, and rhinos. When demand for ivory increased in the mid-eighteenth century, demand for this product also increased. More elephants were killed using the arrow poison. The poison was so deadly that there was an unwritten rule to *never store it in the house but always in the bush*.

MINING AND SMELTING

Mining as an industry was carried out in areas where there were workable mineral deposits, mainly iron ore, which is locally called *thale*. It is still found in many parts of the Tumbuka territory. Thus, mining was practised in many parts of the kingdom. The following sites were the most famous mining and smelting centres in the kingdom: Phopo near Kazuni, Chibuluntha, Chanyoli, Wila (plateau and valley), Nkhonjela hill, Mwanda hill, Mpalasa, Kamilang'ombe River in Muyombe, Sitwe, Dambo marsh, Kajimomo hill, Matendo, Zandu, Kavuwa (Mpalausenga), lower Kalinku River, Lupamazi, Lubonekela, Mbalachanda hill, Chang'anga, Manda hill, Mwata, Buleya, Chisyununu River, Sangu hill on the way to Chief Chikwa in the Kholopete area. Other areas include Membe River, Mugwantha in Chief Mwase, Jenda, Hora Mountain, Kasito, Lubebwya, Chipeta hill and Matimba near Jombo in Mperembe's chiefdom. The most common technique of mining was by open-pit method and done secretly using very primitive tools. However, it was not unusual for some mines to be as deep as twenty metres.

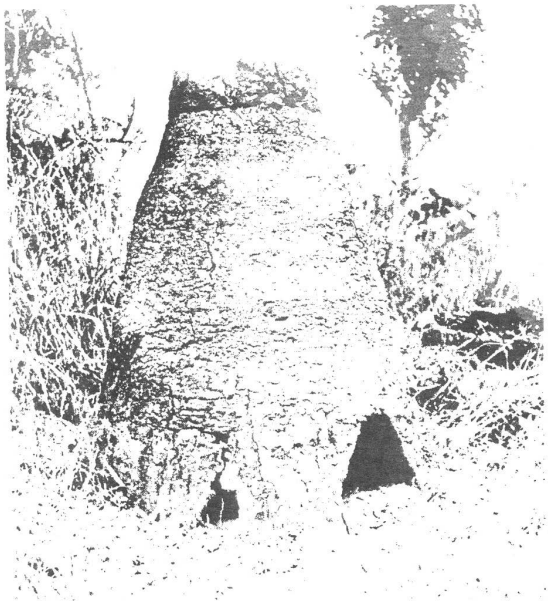


Figure 15: Tradition al furnance (*Ng'anjo*)

In smelting iron ore, much labour was required. First of all, the experts had to choose the site where they were going to build the iron ore furnace, which is locally called *ng'anjo.* This was usually on a highland or on an anthill for uninterrupted supply of air (oxygen) for accelerated and better combustion to take place in the furnace. A kiln of about four metres high and two metres wide at the top and slightly wider at the base was erected on a suitable site. The base had earthenware pipes, through which passed the waste material. These were closed before the heating process began. Broken pieces of carefully selected iron ore (haematite quartz) were placed in the kiln till it was full. *Diza*, a type of catalyst or medicine was also put in the ng'anjo. Fuel for the fire to heat and melt the iron ore was charcoal and firewood from hard trees in the woodlands.

The mixture in the furnace was checked and examined at regular intervals. The mixture was heated red-hot for a long time until it was verified ready. Thereafter, the slag or thale waste was poured out through the (now opened) earthenware pipes at the base of the furnace. The thale waste was called *mavi* (faeces). The smelted

metal that remained in the furnace was called *mukute*. It dropped to the bottom of the furnace. Once the kiln cooled off, the cake of the smelted metal (*mukute*) was hooked out. It was this metal that metalsmiths forged into a number of items. This method of smelting iron ore was practised everywhere in the Tumbuka Kingdom, differing only in minor details. During the smelting process, women were not allowed near the kiln. This was because it was too hot at the smelter, and the task required men to be scantily dressed. Also, the community closely guarded the technology of iron smelting. The men involved did not want women to see what was going on for fear that they would leak the secret to other people outside their community. Also, all the men involved were not allowed to have sex with any woman during the time they were smelting the iron ore. It was a belief that if they had sex, the results would be poor.

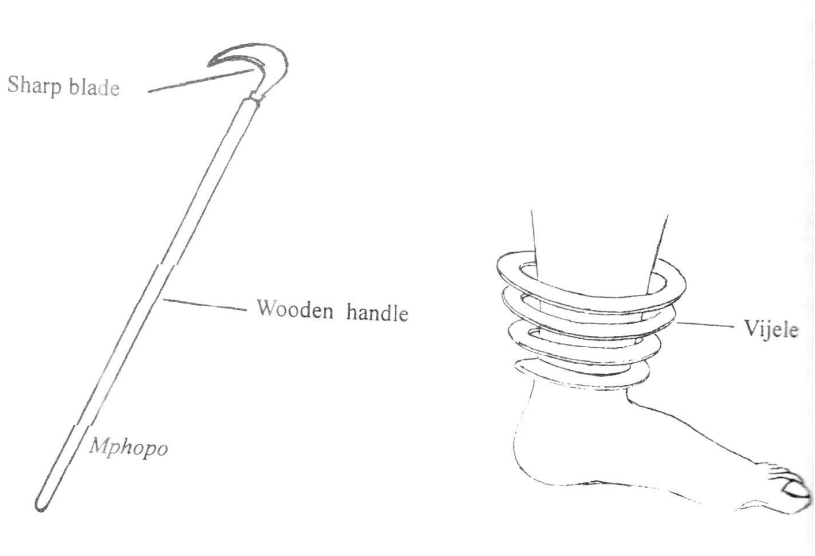


Figure 16: The *Mphopo* and *Vijele*

TOOL MANUFACTURING

After the metal was produced, the next stage was the fabrication of usable finished products. Manufacturing or production of various

tools from metal is not something new in an Africa society. Egyptians, ancient West Africans, and the ancient Zimbabweans, just to mention a few, did it hundreds of years ago. A number of Tumbuka also learned the art of forging metal into a variety of tools. Community metalsmiths forged many articles from the smelted iron. Such articles included the following: spears, ordinary axes, wedge-shaped axe blades for hammering out barkcloth, knives, hoes, hammers, harpoons (*mphopo*), and barbed spears. Others were *mahomwa* (large axes in the form of hoes, with sharp wide blades), ordinary bangles, ankle bangles exclusively for women (*vijele*), sickles, arrow-heads, and fish hooks. They also made bracelets mainly for sale.

Farming depended on axes and hoes manufactured by metalsmiths in the kingdom. The survival of other industries also depended on tools from the metalsmiths. Tumbuka metalsmiths were very skilled at mechanical repairs and making casting for broken parts of machines. Such skills were very useful and tested from the nineteenth century when guns began circulating in the kingdom. The skilled artisans repaired locally made guns and those bought from the foreigners. They even made new nipples for the guns and repaired gunlocks. [69]

BARKCLOTH INDUSTRY

Barkcloth (nyanda or nkwizu) production was a noble task exclusively for men in the Tumbuka society. The industry was directly connected to the type of environment in existence. Where there were good woodlands with excellent species of trees for barkcloth, like *miyombo* or *chiyombo* trees, this industry flourished, as was the case in many parts of the Tumbuka Kingdom.

The following is a general account of how barkcloth was made: The barks of selected barkcloth trees (such as miyombo) were carefully

---

[69] For details on this, read Cullen Gouldsbury and Hubert Sheane, *The Great Plateau of Northern Rhodesia: Being Some Impressions of the Tanganyika Plateau* (London: Edward Arnord, 1911), pp. 279–80.

removed from the trees and systematically hit with a special club meant for this purpose only. The hitting process produced fresh pulp or strips of fibres that were delicately collected and cautiously sun-dried. Sometimes they were smoked. The dried strips were left to spend a night in water. Thereafter, the process of cloth-making began. It involved joining strips together to make one piece of cloth. Later, the cloth was carefully smoothened. Specialists undertook the process of colouring or dying the barkcloth. First, juice was extracted from the berries of the *musangati* trees. Thereafter, the barkcloth was immersed in the juice so collected.

Even calico, which replaced barkcloth by the twelfth century, was made black through the same process of crushing the berries of the musangati trees and mixing the juice with coal-black swamp mud. Black dyes were also easily obtained from the roots of the *kaminda* shrub. Red colour was extracted from leaves of the *usishi* tree. Castor oil, locally manufactured from castor oil plant (*mono*) that grew (and still does) naturally in the kingdom, especially in the Luangwa Valley, was an excellent smoothening and beautifying agent for the barkcloth. The other product for decorating the barkcloth was red ochre, locally called *nkhama*. Red ochre was made out of reddish alluvial soil from river valleys. The reddish alluvial substance was filtered and the residual was made into balls that were burned. Besides its use in dying nyanda, the red ochre was used in decorating the clay pots. For this reason, mono and nkhama were in great demand and commanded relatively high price in local and regional trade. Skins of wild animals, goats, and cattle supplemented nyanda. Animal skins and hides were carefully treated by local experts to become soft and smooth. In normal situations, women wore nyanda and men wore skins. This was because animal skins withstood the vigour of hunting expeditions undertaken by men. Nyanda was not strong enough for such activities.

HANDCRAFT INDUSTRY

A survey of handicrafts made by the Tumbuka using local materials revealed a general progress, although some of their work lacked

perfection and precision. However, people in some parts of the kingdom produced items of very high quality as was the case with the Tumbuka in the Luangwa Valley, Chamanyavyose's chiefdom. The difference in quality enhanced trade between those who produced better items and those that produced items of poor quality. Wood materials produced by the Tumbuka included the following: stools, benches, chairs, food containers (like wooden plates), hoe handles, axe handles, knife handles, drums, and walking sticks. Other items were baskets and mats either from reeds, bamboos or bamboo leaves or coconut tree leaves. *Mitaba* and miyombo trees were the main supplies of wood for this important leisure time industry. The Tumbuka were known for their very-high-quality mats and baskets that were the envy of their neighbours.

Spinning and weaving were other important activities among the Tumbuka. A spindle whorl was used to spin the thread from the raw cotton. The western part of the kingdom, especially the Luangwa Valley, had plenty of wild cotton. After spinning, they used the threads to weave cloth.

Pottery, especially pot-making, was exclusively a task for women and depended on the availability of clay of specific quality. Fortunately, such clay was found in many parts of the kingdom; hence, the industry was undertaken everywhere in the territory. Nets (*vilepa* and njelo) were also made locally from local fibres and cotton threads.

SALT-MAKING INDUSTRY

The Chibwa salt pans in Mpika became the largest salt-making centre west of the Tumbuka Kingdom. In Utumbuka, there were many salt pans as well, from which a lot of salt was produced. Salt-makers gathered in the salt pans during the dry season, the convenient salt-making season. The following was the process in manufacturing salt in the salt pans. First, grass in the salt pans was cut. It was then carefully sun-dried. Later, it was burned in such a way as to produce cinders or ashes. The ashes were gathered and put in large earthenware

pots prepared by women. The pot was in the shape of an inverted cone. It was suspended from a post and filled with cinders containing salt. Water was poured on the cinders in the vessel, and it percolated through them and ran out at the small holes at the bottom of the pot. The filtered salty water was caught in a wooden trough placed under the vessel to receive it. The salty water was poured in new pots. The pots were put on the fire, and the salty water was boiled until it evaporated, leaving salt at the bottom. To get the salt, the pot was broken and the cake of salt so obtained was dried thoroughly. The salt was white in colour.

Where there were no salt pans in the kingdom, salt was obtained from streams. This was alluvial or rock salt. An ordinary size ball of rock salt was called *mpinda*. A big ball was called *chipinda*. Salt was also obtained from a kind of potash made from ashes secured by burning certain reeds, grasses, or maize stalks (from the twentieth century). There are some parts in the kingdom where such type of salt is still manufactured today. The skills of manufacturing the salt have been passed on from one generation to the other by word of mouth up to this day.

Salt-making in Luapula Province, Zambia

Figure 17: Salt-making in Luapula Province, Zambia

LOCAL, REGIONAL, AND LONG-DISTANCE TRADE

The Tumbuka actively participated in local, regional, and long-distance trade in Central Africa. They traded with the Bisa and Bemba on the western border, with the Chewa and the Portuguese or the Chikunda, the Portuguese agents on the southern border; the Nkonde to the north; the Lakeshore Tonga to the east, and the Arabs (*balungwana*) and the Swahili from the east coast.

Local and regional trade used more or less similar goods from each participating society. However, long-distance trade focused on exotic goods that appeared in the Tumbuka society for the first time. Slaves and ivory were the main items of trade from the Tumbuka territory in the long-distance trade mainly with the Arabs and the Swahili in mid nineteenth century.

Local trade was the exchange of goods among people within the same local environment, such as among villages. Regional trade was the exchange of goods among chiefdoms of the same society or with neighbouring societies, such as among the Tumbuka chiefdoms and those of the Bemba and Chewa chiefdoms. Long-distance trade took place among people of different regions. It involved foreign goods from distant places, such as trade among the peoples of East and Central Africa.

LOCAL TRADE

The Tumbuka organised their local trade very well, and it benefited many people in the kingdom. They produced different goods of high quality and sold them within their communities scattered all over the vast territory. The following trade items were in circulation: fresh and dried wild fruits, barkcloth (nyanda), salt, iron tools, and weapons such as axes, spears, and knives. Others were bangles (*vikono* or *makhoza*) of different types, such as ivory bangles, iron bangles, elephant hoof bangles, bangles made from buffalo skins (*vikombe*), and bangles or rings made from elephant or buffalo hair, especially hair from their

respective tails. They also traded clay pots, tobacco, honey, cattle, goats, chickens, millet meal, dried meat, and various foods.

Red or copper bangles (locally called *mikuwa*) or iron bangles (locally called *mbizi*) were very important ornaments in society. They were exclusively for women, who wore them on the wrists or on the ankles. The cylindrical ankle bangles, locally called vijele, produced some nice sound as the woman walked. When bangles were initially introduced, only members of the royalty wore them. However, later on, people outside royalty were allowed to wear them.

Prices of items differed from one area to another, depending on the laws of supply and demand. Many transactions were on barter system. Oral evidence has revealed that the Tumbuka also practised silent trade, but it did not last for a long time. Research has revealed only the prices for some items. For example, two pieces of barkcloth were exchanged with one chicken; one ordinary-sized hoe could buy two chickens, but a big hoe bought three chickens; a goat fetched four hoes; six hoes bought a cow. Three hoes were enough as marriage payment in the Tumbuka traditional marriages. A medium-sized clay pot was bartered with three chickens. A ball of rock salt, mpinda, was exchanged with one hoe. These prices give a general picture of the cost of the goods in the local trade.

REGIONAL TRADE

Before the arrival of the Senga in Chamanyavyose's chiefdom the Tumbuka traded with the Bisa and the Bemba in regional trade. From these two neighbours, the Tumbuka bought arrow poison (ulembe) mounted on the spearhead or on the arrowhead (locally known as *ncheto*), a speciality of the Bisa, particularly the ones from Kambwiri area. They also bought regionally known Chibwa salt and copper bangles (mbizi), most likely imported from Katanga in the present Democratic Republic of Congo. After 1780, the Senga took over the Chamanyavyose's chiefdom in the Luangwa Valley.

As a result of this, after 1800, the Senga are the ones that supplied the Tumbuka with these items. In addition, the newcomers sold the Tumbuka a number of quality products, such as baskets, reed mats, and tobacco. One big ball of tobacco fetched one hoe. The Tumbuka also supplied them with castor oil and cloth made locally from wild cotton. Spinning and weaving were other important activities among the Senga that they copied from the Tumbuka. From the Chewa, especially of Mwase Kasungu and Mwase Mphangwe, the Tumbuka bought salt and arrow poison.

Through trade, the Tumbuka were able to acquire enough cattle, and they learned the culture of cattle-keeping. The Lakeshore Tonga, neighbours on the east, supplied them with salt and dried fish. The items that the Tumbuka produced for their local trade were the same ones they sold in the regional trade.

REGIONAL AND LONG-DISTANCE TRADE PATTERN IN THE TUMBUKA KINGDOM UP TO 1750

Producers	**Exports***	**Exported to**	**Imports***	**Imported from**
Tumbuka	nyanda, local cotton cloth, tobacco, grain, mats, ivory, arrow poison, foodstuff, and arrowheads	Bisa, Bemba, Chewa, Lakeshore Tonga, and Nkonde	local salt, sea salt, tobacco, grain, iron tools, arrow poison, beads, calico, basketry, guns, and ammunition	Bemba, Bisa, Arabs, Swahili, and Portuguese
Bemba and Bisa	arrow poison, local salt, barkcloth, ivory, iron tools, and dried meat	Tumbuka, Portuguese, Chikunda, Arabs, and Swahili	guns, ammunition, beads, tobacco, grain, fish, calico, sea salt, and basketry	Tumbuka, Arabs, Swahili, Portuguese, Namwanga, Lungu, and Chikunda
Arabs, Swahili, and Portuguese	beads, guns, ammunitions, sea salt, tobacco, calico, and seashells	Tumbuka, Bisa, Bemba, Chewa, Lungu, Nkonde, and Namwanga	grain, ivory, slaves, dried meat, gold, and foodstuff	Tumbuka, Bemba, Chewa, Bisa, Chikunda, and Nkonde

*Not necessarily arranged in the order of who produced the items, exported them, or imported them.

LONG-DISTANCE TRADE

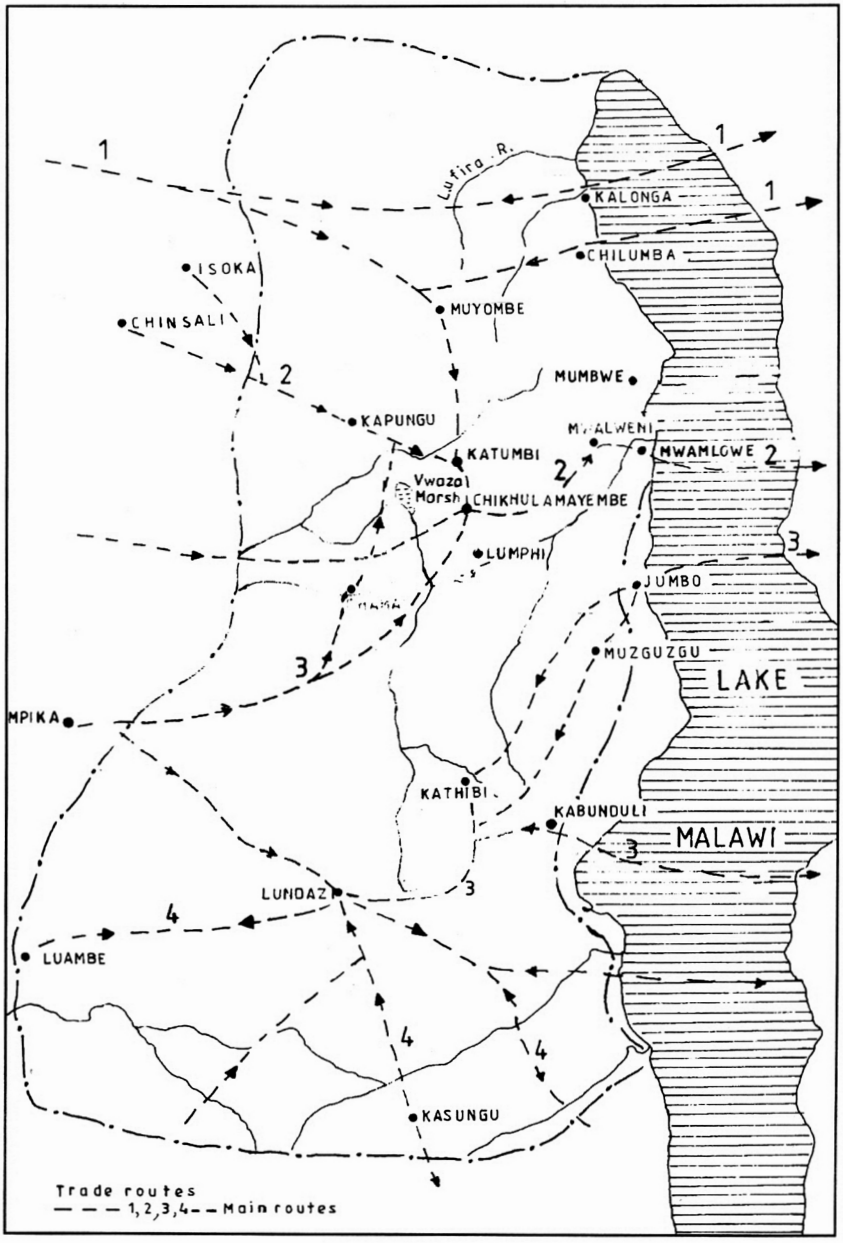
In the long-distance trade, the Tumbuka had contacts with the Arabs and the Swahili from the east coast, the Balowoka from across Lake Malawi, and the Portuguese or their agents, the Chikunda from the south, in the lower Zambezi Valley. The Portuguese brought calico for sale. For two bundles of their calico, they got one adult slave from the Tumbuka. Calico was a very precious item in the society. It was stored in a cylindrical container made from the bark of a tree inside the roof . This was to avoid being eaten by ants. A bundle of cloth or calico was known by various names, such as *mutumba*, *gola*, or *utaka*. A piece of ivory was exchanged for three bundles of cloth. Pumbulu Bota, a specialist elephant hunter (fundi or chibinda) sold a lot of ivory to the Arab traders who came to the Lundazi area.[70] For their own survival, the Arabs bought various foodstuffs from the Tumbuka. That was because sometimes they stayed in the kingdom for up to a year, doing business. For more details on items of trade and trade routes, see the Table above and Map 7.

From the Arabs, the Swahili, and the Balowoka, the Tumbuka bought exotic goods, like beads, calico, copper bangles (including the vijele), ankle bangles exclusively for women (these were also locally made), guns, gun powder and ammunition, trinkets, dried sea fish, and sea salt. Slaves, ivory, and foodstuffs were the major items of trade they bought from the Tumbuka. They also bought buffalo, rhino, and kudu horns. Thus, ivory and slaves were not for local or regional trade but almost exclusively for long-distance trade. Tobacco powder, also known as snuff tobacco, brought by the Arabs was exchanged for slaves. Pressed tobacco (*magoda* or *chambwa*) was exchanged for millet meal and other foodstuffs.

In the eighteenth century, slave trade was the main type of trade in this area and seriously devastated the Tumbuka. That was the time the Balowoka decided to permanently settle in the Tumbuka Kingdom from 1785. They also greatly contributed to its disintegration politically in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Slavery and slave trade is covered separately in chapter 11.

---

70 Macpherson, Seminar–Workshop on Oral Records of Local History, p. 65.



Map 7. Nineteenth Century Trade Routes in the Tumbuka Kingdom

CHAPTER SIX

MARRIAGES AMONG THE TUMBUKA

MARRIAGE

Traditionally, in the olden days, before the arrival of the Balowoka, there were two ways of marrying among the Tumbuka. There was the marriage arranged by *parents* (parents' choice), locally known as *nthengwa yakufikizga*, and the marriage by *personal choice*, called *nthengwa yakufikila*. However, with the coming of the Western culture, arranged marriages gradually gave way to marriages by personal choice. This time, it is very rare to come across marriages arranged by parents in the Tumbuka society.

MARRIAGES ARRANGED BY PARENTS

If a family had boys and girls of marriageable ages, members of the family looked around in the *community* for girls to be married by their boys or boys to marry their daughters. They looked for boys and girls from good families. These were families that had respectful people and had not been linked in any way to witchcraft. They also went for very hard-working people in the community. Young men and women who were hard-working and respectful to elders usually married soon after puberty than those that were rude and lazy.

Marriages between cousins were very common among the Tumbuka, who were also polygamous. There were no *marriage payments* in the marriages between *real* cousins in the African context, (and not cousins in the European context)—that is, marriage between a child of a brother and a child of a sister.

In the olden days, the Tumbuka married from within the village or the chiefdom. It was very rare to marry from distant places. Chiefs or subkings never married from very far, especially the first wife. There were intermarriages with the neighbouring peoples but were initially quite rare. With the passage of time, intermarriages became frequent, *especially* between the Tumbuka and the bordering people, such as the Chewa, the Bisa, the Bemba, the Namwanga, the Nkonde, and the Lakeshore Tonga. By the end of the eighteenth century, there were intermarriages between the Tumbuka and the incoming groups of people, such as the Balowoka, the Senga, and the Ngoni.

Once the parents of the boy agreed to have their son marry a girl they identified from a certain family, they quickly arranged for someone to go to the village of the girl. The purpose of this trip was to *spy* on the girl and confirm that she was *indeed* a good and cultured girl for their son to marry. The girl's family was aware of the secret probe but did not exactly know the person that would undertake the reconnaissance trip. The boy was also not aware that his parents were arranging a marriage for him. But as a rule, children never objected to their parents' choices. The advantage of undertaking the reconnaissance trip secretly was that if the 'spy' reported negatively about the girl and the whole project was abandoned by the boy's family, no harm would be created between the two families. There would be no reason to cause a breach of friendly relations between the two families.

However, if the spy reported positively, members of the boy's family quickly met and discussed the issue and appointed someone who would represent the family in the marriage arrangements with the girl's family. A family representative or a *go-between* in the marriage arrangements is locally called *nkalamba* or *thenga.* He went to the girl's family, usually in the afternoon, and broke the news about the marriage proposal from the boy's family. It was also not uncommon

for the *go-between* to go very early in the morning and knock at the door of the house of the girl's parents. The knock was an expression that their daughter was going to the family of very hard-working people, who start work very early in the morning before all the people come out of their houses. The girl's family called its core family members to discuss the marriage proposal. The response was usually given the following day to the thenga from the boy's family. As the host, the girl's family gave food and accommodation to the thenga.

The following morning, the thenga was given the response from the girl's family. If it was negative, he was told in a diplomatic way that the girl was already committed with another man. They said that the girl was already 'shut off'. That was a polite way of saying *no* to the marriage proposal, and it marked the end of the marriage issue between the two families. If the answer was positive, the thenga was told that the girl's family had accepted the marriage proposal. The positive response from the girl's family allowed the boy's family to meet again and discuss the next steps to take.

First, the boy was called and told of his future wife. He may or may not have heard about her or known her. That did not matter. The important thing was that the girl was to be his future wife whether he liked it or not. Second, marriage instructions for the boy began thereafter in order to adequately prepare him for marriage. The family or clan elders took up this responsibility. Third, the boy was told not to go close to his future parents-in-law. The 'fearing' taboos by the boy were immediately enforced. If he saw his future parents-in-law, he was supposed to avoid coming close to them. If they were coming from the opposite direction on the same path, he was supposed to give way and hide a distance away off the path. Fourth, the boy was advised very strongly against meeting his future wife or playing with her in any way. No young couple were permitted to keep company until after the offer and acceptance of goods and the right of property had been established. Kissing each other in public was an unthinkable feat. In fact, it was not done! Courting or sex before marriage was a punishable offence. It also brought shame to the affected families. That was considered more of a 'punishment' to

the families than anything else, and they were treated like 'cursed' families in the community. The boy's family paid heavily for the offence.

The other thing the boy's family discussed was the payment of *chimalo*, the main marriage payment. Before this was paid, there were other small preliminary payments. The first preliminary payment was called *chamulomo* or *chijula mulomo* (the payment that opens (*jula*) the mouth (*mulomo*) to start talking). That was the preliminary payment for the *actual*, serious discussions on the marriage issue between the two families to begin. It was usually a hoe or a chicken. It was quickly organised and taken to the girl's family by the thenga. If the girl's family thought that the chijula mulomo was not adequate, they asked for some more items. However, such a situation was quite rare. It was, however, not uncommon for the girl's family to demand the *odi* (knock on the door) payment before the chijula mulomo payment. The demands for odi (also known by other names) payments were also very rare.

The family members of the woman to be married, particularly the father or her uncles, decided the amount of the full marriage payment, chimalo (also known as *thumba*), to be paid by the boy's family. Normally, the initial figure was always subject to serious negotiations with the man's family, led by its representative. In all marriages, the initial marriage payment, chijula mulomo, was the most important one. Once it was paid, the marriage was sanctioned. The *accepted full* marriage payment included beads, chickens, goats, and hoes. Normally, three hoes were sufficient as full marriage payment. The first of the main payment (chimalo) was usually a traditionally manufactured hoe tied with a string of local (later, imported white) beads and covered in nyanda, which would be taken to the parents of the girl by the representative of the man's family. Any local hoe that was used in marriage payment was called *sabili*.

Figure 18: Marriage Panel in session

Once the girl's family accepted the chijula mulomo, the boy's family began fulfilling specific traditional marriage obligations required of them. For instance, the boy was told to go and build a house in the village of the girl's family, where he will be living with his wife *after all* the marriage procedures were *completed*. He was also told to start working for his parents-in-law to prove himself that he was *capable* of supporting his wife or living with their daughter without experiencing food shortages because of his failure to grow enough food for the family. He worked for them for a considerable time before the next stage was initiated. Sometimes, his friends came to assist him. While there, his mother-in-law was responsible for all his meals. The girl did most of the cooking of the food sent to his house. The boy was not all the time staying in the girl's village. He sometimes went back to his

village in the evening after a day's work and came back the following morning to accomplish the task or came back when he was assigned another task.

When the girl's family was satisfied with the boy's performance, they arranged to officially start the final procedures for the marriage. The family appointed elderly women (usually the *bazamba*) from the village to go to the boy's village and bring the boy to the girl's village. Somehow, the boy's side was made aware of the day when the women from the girl's family would be arriving. The women entered the boy's village with an especially slow processional step and announced the purpose of their trip in piecemeal form. That was a way of getting presents from the boy's family. The members of the boy's family paid for each processional movement forward by the group from the girl's family. Payments were normally in small quantities of items such as beads and bangles. The ceremony was known as *Kuwongozga*.

After the 'entering the village' ceremony, the party from the girl's village was given some food and drinks. After the meal, they rested and chatted with the people in the village. While that was happening, the boy was told by the members of the family to get ready for the journey to the girl's village. He was later handed over to the women, and they left with him to the girl's village, where preparations were going on to officially welcome him. Among the things the boy carried to the girl's village were a bow and an arrow, a symbol of a cultured, well-instructed man in traditional Tumbuka society. In most cases, the boy was accompanied by some friends and close members of the family, both men and women. As the whole group approached the girl's village, the boy began the slow processional steps. Each movement forward was paid for in presents like beads.

As the boy came in full view of the merrymakers, he aimed and shot his arrow in the ground.[71] The arrow was expected to *stick* in the

[71] The other version of this tradition is that the arrow is aimed at the trunk of a tree, not at the ground. This is because according to this version, aiming the arrow at the ground meant that the man decided to divorce his wife. He shoots the arrow in the ground, and it should remain stuck

ground at an angle and remain like that, not *fall* on the ground. As it stuck in the ground, the action was highly acclaimed by the onlookers. This *successful* action signified his *strength* as a man. There and then, the *man* was given a piece of grass by a member of the girl's family that he again *successfully* broke into six pieces, to the approval of the witnesses in the village. This action meant that he had passed a test of *bravery*. The bystanders, most of whom were part of the merrymakers, clapped hands in appreciation of what the man had just done.

In the village, he was particularly welcome by members of the girl's family. A grand reception was organised for him, at which beer was one of the drinks served to him. His wife was not present at this reception. That night, he slept in his house, the one he built earlier, together with the friends that accompanied him. The following day, he was served food prepared by his mother-in-law. The same day, he sent a message through an elderly person of the village to his parents-in-law, requesting to see his wife. As a rule, the messenger of this message carried a present from the son-in-law to the parents-in-law.

In the evening, the senior women of the village, usually the bazamba, together with a few girls, went to the house of the girl's parents and collected the girl. Together, they went to the husband's house. In the house, they found the man with his companions. Together, they chatted for a long time, usually up to the early hours of the following morning. After that, they *all* left the house, leaving the boy *alone*. The chatting session was primarily for the elderly women to assess the suitability of the man. If, for some reasons, during the chatting session, the senior women did not approve the match between the man and the woman, they quickly declared and announced to the parents of the girl that the marriage was null and void. There and then, everything could come to an end. If all was well, things proceeded as per tradition.

A few days later, he again asked to see his wife through the same process. A present was again sent together with the message. That time, the girl's family got ready for a full ceremony of 'housing'. This

---

there at an angle, preferably a forty-five-degree angle, signifying the decision to divorce.

was the ceremony in which the girl is officially taken to the man's house. Invitations by *word of mouth* were sent to the members of the man's family to attend the important ceremony. On the day of the ceremony, many activities took place in the girl's village in readiness for the arrival of the people from her husband's village. At this special occasion, the girl wore a beautiful goatskin and was also adorned with millet meal sprinkled on the face. She also covered her wrists with attractive pieces of specially treated nyanda. The couple's house was also skilfully cleaned and readied for occupation by the newly-weds. This was a day of grand merrymaking in the girl's village. The people from the girl's village, those from the man's village, and invited guests together drank traditional beer, danced, and enjoyed themselves all day and all night till the following morning.

The people from the boy's village arrived on the day of the ceremony. As per tradition, they entered the village in slow processional steps. Usually, this was in the late afternoon or early evening. They went to where the girl was and invited her to go with them to the house where the ceremony was to take place: the boy's house. In the house was a mat spread on the floor. The girl entered the house in slow processional steps, each time hesitating to enter until presents or more presents were given to her. After more presents were given to her, she went in but did not sit down on the mat until more presents were given to her. She sat on the mat, and the boy was also made to sit on the girl's side. Both had their heads bowed, which was a sign of respect at such occasions, and won the admiration all those who have come to witness the event. The house was filled with married men and women. Each of the onlookers individually gave advice to the couple on how to face the new life they were entering into. After some time, they all filed out of the house and left the couple alone to have their first night together.[72] That was the first time each one of them had sex.

---

[72] This ceremony of giving advice to the couple could be done either in the afternoon or evening, as explained, or early in the morning the following day.

Figure 19: Marriage confirmation time

Outside the house, people were dancing and feasting throughout the night. They danced the marriage dances—namely, *mbeleka* and *chondo* (also known as *mkocho*). These dances are explained in detail below under an appropriate heading. In the morning, the elderly women from the *man's family* came into the couple's house. They took the girl to a place where they bathed and anointed her. They brought the girl back in the house and asked the boy if he was satisfied with the performance of the girl on their first night. This was to confirm the virginity of the girl and consequently endorsing her position as a properly instructed (*kasi ngwa kulangwa*!) woman or not. If the man's answer was negative, the whole question of the marriage was reopened and could even be cancelled. But if the man's answer was positive, the man's group left happily back to their village. The girl's family in the village was also very happy that things went well. A girl who had sex before marriage created many problems for her family at this time.

A few months after the wedding, the man's father went to the village of his son's wife, where his son lived with his wife. He went there pretending to be looking for his son. But the main purpose for his trip was to acquaint himself with the community in the village where his

son was living. That was a trip specifically for him to assess the type of relationship there was between him and his new relations, the ones in the family of his daughter-in-law. As per tradition, he was welcomed by the men of the village, including those from the family of his daughter-in-law. They ate food and drank beer together. In the evening of the same day, he went back to his village.

As a result of the marriage, there developed a strong relationship, usually a good one, between parents of the wife and parents of the husband. The term or concept *basebele* describes the relationship between the parents of the couple. It was also a *term* commonly used by *parents* of the *husband* in reference to *parents* of the *wife* and vice versa. That is to say, the *wife's parents* called the *husband's parents* as their *basebele* and vice versa. The man lived in the wife's village for two to three years, within which he was expected to complete the remaining marriage payment (chimalo). During this time, he worked for his own family and the family of his wife. Again, this was to prove that he was a good son-in-law and capable of keeping their daughter properly.

The family of the wife only allowed the husband to go with his wife to his village permanently if they proved him to be of good behaviour and hard-working. The permission was only granted after he had completed paying the chimalo. Such payments were in fact redemption payments for the husband. This is discussed below under *mtupa* claim. It was also a general cultural practice among the Tumbuka that if the first wife was unable to conceive and yet the husband was very good to her and her family, the wife's family gave the husband another woman as a second wife. Usually, this was her younger sister. This second woman (wife) was called *mbiliya*.[73] She was a gift from the family of the *wife* who was unable to conceive. He did not pay any marriage payments to the family for the mbiliya. However, if her husband's behaviour and conduct were not good, the families concerned officially discontinued the marriage.

---

[73] The Ngoni who settled among the Tumbuka in the 1860s had the same practice. The Ngoni name for the second woman (wife) is *hlazi*. The Ngoni had this practice in Zululand before they settled in Central Africa, including Zambia and Malawi.

Living in the wife's village was called *ukweni*. Practically, the term *mukweni* meant 'son-in-law', as opposed to *mukamwana*, 'daughter-in-law'. The son-in-law was generally known as the mukweni of the parents of his wife or the mukweni of the family of his wife and also generally as the mukweni of the people in the village. The same was true for the daughter-in-law.

By tradition, the children the couple produced were for his wife's family, especially her uncles, to whom all the children in any matrilineal society (like that of the *original* Tumbuka) belonged. They were the property of the wife's family. The man's nephews and nieces came to live with him in the village of his wife's family. During field research, we were told that sometimes, after the couple lived in the wife's village for many years and had many children there, the man did move back to his village together with his wife and his nephews and nieces, but left his biological children with wife's uncles. Although this was the original custom, as the Tumbuka gradually became more complex (or gravitated towards the patrilineal system), this was quite rare.

In most cases, before they left, his parents-in-law (wife's parents) gave them one of their (wife's parents) own biological children, usually a daughter. The daughter became an additional wife for the man. This child was commonly known as *chinyolola pa muwongo* or *chinyolola pa musana*. What it actually meant was that 'the man was now tired and had *twisted* his *back* to produce the children, he must, therefore, be given a child to *straighten* it'. Back in his own village, he could marry as many women as he could afford the chimalo.

Figure 20: Marriage: Wife and husband at the final advice-giving ceremony.

MARRIAGE BY PERSONAL CHOICE

In marriages by personal choice, the boy identifies on his own the girl he wants to marry, and thereafter, the process is the same as explained above. The parents take over the whole process. It was clear during the field interviews that in the pre-Balowoka era, *marriageable girls*, *ba mwali*, were *not* accommodated in the houses *exclusively* meant for them in *each* village. But the girls in *each family* slept in their own house built for them by the family. The same was true for the boys, who built their own house.

Boys and girls in a particular community met and talked to each other in many convenient places. They met at ceremonies such as *uzamba* (marriage ceremonies) or at other festivals in the community. Afterwards, the boys investigated secretly the conduct, behaviour, and character of the girls they wanted to marry. They also investigated the characteristics of the families of the girls they fell in love with.

At an appropriate time, a boy who wanted to propose marriage to a girl he fell in love with went to the house of the girl in a specific family location in the village at a convenient time. In the house, normally in the company of a colleague and in the evening, they had discussions with the girl for a long time. These 'secret' meetings went on sometimes for several days till they concluded their discussions. At each time she was visited, the host prepared food for the young men. In most cases, the girl was never alone; she had a companion to assist her and act as a witness to the discussions.

The discussions were usually done in riddles or parables. For example, instead of saying 'I do not love you', the girl said 'The needle is blunt'. If she wanted to find out about the person whom her own family's go-between will meet in the boy's family, she said, 'Where will I land?' Later in the nineteenth century, this changed to 'Where will the aeroplane land?'

The opening conversation went like this: 'Na muntu ndine, tambala nchiyuni. Nkuti nichite chakuzgula, chakutema chikusunda yayi. Usange wanitemwa utaye kumutowa, nitowele mwemwe, pala wanipata unitaye ku chizgala [chizala], nizalile banji.' This is translated as: I am a human being, the cock is a bird. What I want is to take you altogether, not take you and throw you off. If you love me, say it out, and I will be attracted to you. If you reject me, throw me on the garbage heap. Other girls may have value for me.[74]

Immediately, the girl accepted his proposal for marriage, and the boy gave her a present to express his happiness and as a declaration of his serious commitment to the marriage proposal. The present was called *chikhole*. This was equivalent to an engagement ring in our modern world, and it consisted of any small amount of presents of less value. However, from the time of foreign beads, chikhole comprised a small amount of beads of various colours. The girl gave the present to her aunt or to an elderly woman in her family as proof of her acceptance of the marriage proposal. Her aunt (or the elderly woman) knew

---

[74] Young, *Notes on the Customs and Folk-lore of the Tumbuka–Kamanga Peoples*, p. 83. The wording has been changed slightly in some parts.

exactly what it meant to have such presents from her niece. Thereafter, the aunt informed the parents of the girl, and she simultaneously took up the task of teaching the engaged niece about married life in preparation for the coming marriage. The boy also informed members of his family, and on hearing the good news, they quickly began arranging the traditional marriage procedures as explained above on Marriage Arranged by Parents**.**

In the same vein, if the girl accepted the proposal, she gave the man a present as an expression of happiness and serious commitment to the marriage proposal. This could be any small item of less value. The item was called *chidani.* However, from the advent of foreign beads, chidani consisted of white beads. These were knit in such a way as to form something like a strap of a wristwatch. Similarly, chidani was something like an engagement ring in our modern society. Any man wearing a chidani was telling the members of his community that he was affianced.

The headman, chief, subking, or king married any woman he wanted in the community. He also paid chimalo, but for him, it was paid in full at once. Because of this and his status, he never lived in the wife's village. There were virtually no marriages by elopement (a situation where a man takes a woman as his wife without following the marriage procedures and runs away with her to his village) in the ancient Tumbuka society. This was because experience had shown that such 'forced' marriages led to interclan fights.

If a wife died and the husband was a good person to the wife's family, the deceased's family looked for a replacement for him. It could be a young sister of the deceased or another woman in the family. She became the new wife of the man to take care of the children the deceased left behind. The replacement woman was called *kajula mpinga* (the door opener) or *chituntulo* or *chimeta masisi* (the one to cut the husband's hair or to help the husband in many tasks). What it meant was that the woman had come to help the remaining husband, the widower. In appreciation, the man's family gave presents to the dead wife's family, normally chickens and pots.

If a husband died, the deceased husband's family organised a replacement to marry the surviving wife. Usually, it was a younger brother, a nephew, or any close relative. The widow was given a chance to choose a husband from among the dead husband's relatives. The choice was made at the (head) hair-cutting ritual in the presence of members of her family and the family of her dead husband. The widow chose the man by inviting him to cut her hair. The man who cut her hair became her husband. The other method was for the widow (*chokolo*) to collect her deceased husband's axe or spear and give it to the man she wants to inherit her. If she gave the spear or the axe to her son, it meant that she did not want to be inherited. Such cases were very rare indeed. If the young brother of the deceased was not available or did not want to inherit the widow, which was very rare, the widow had a choice from her deceased husband's cousins.

The children born in that house were not for the cousin who inherited the widow. They were considered to be the children of the deceased person. They took the surname of the deceased person. For example, if Mkandabile inherits Nyirenda's wife, the children that Mkandabile will have with the widow will use the surname Nyirenda and not Mkandabile. The cultural explanation is that Mkandabile is just continuing where Nyirenda stopped. Inheriting a widow is called *kupyana* (inherit). However, the term *chokolo* is always for a widow or an *inherited* woman.[75] A small present from the new husband that was not considered as marriage payment but as a confirmation of the new arrangement was given to the family of the inherited widow in the presence of witnesses. The practice of inheriting widows is still going on today in the modern Tumbuka society. However, its future is in danger because of the deadly disease HIV/AIDS. However, in the past, if there was nobody in the deceased man's family to marry the widow, which was a very unusual situation indeed, she was left free to marry anyone she fell in love with within the community.

---

[75] Note that inheritance was not only for the widows left by their dead husbands. It was also extended to the wife of any *machona* (returned labour migrant) who had overstayed in the centres of employment. His young brother or cousin could legally inherit the wife he left in the village.

From the time of the Ngoni in Utumbuka, marriage of a *mwali* was announced by a food ceremony. The Tumbuka copied this system from the Ngoni. The girl prepared food with the assistance of the bazamba, and the food was traditionally sent to her prospective parents-in-law. The relish for such food was always a village chicken, the *dignified* relish at such occasions. The chicken was prepared in a special traditional way. The front part of the chicken was cut open. The head, gizzard (*nyondo* or *chihururu*) and liver (*chibindi* or *chifu*) were all left in position. The chicken was cooked as a whole and adorned with beads on the leg and on the neck. The gravy from the cooking of the chicken was kept and served separately. Sometimes, additional relish, such as mushroom and fish, were prepared and served in separate plates. The girl was not allowed to taste the food she prepared.

The bazamba showed her the favourite dishes of her future husband.[76] All the food prepared by the bride was taken to the prospective parents-in-law by the elderly women. This time, the girl was commonly called *mwali wa kulangwa*, the trained maiden. All the time when she was preparing food, she wore clothes that showed that she was not yet pregnant. However, after the food reached the future parents-in-law, she went back and wore her usual clothes and ornaments.

MARRIAGE DANCES

While on the topic of marriage, let us explain in detail the two marriage dances performed by the ancient Tumbuka. These were mbeleka and chondo, also known as mkocho. Both dances were performed at night in the village of the girl getting married and normally outside the house of the newly married couple. The mbeleka dance was also called the *reed* dance, a name derived from the musical instruments made from the reeds. Dry reeds were bored and partially filled with some dry sand. The dancers, each holding the reed, struck

[76] Note that fish was one of the favourite relishes among the Tumbuka families, but it was not a popular relish among the true Ngoni families.

their reeds on the ground. The action produced a melody similar to that produced by modern tambourine. The mbeleka marriage dance was for adult males and females only. They danced in lines facing each other, man to woman. The movements or style of dancing was similar to that done at the uzamba dance.

The mkocho or chondo dance was also performed by adult males and females only. Each dancer wore a clean, fresh barkcloth that was well decorated and anointed prior to the dance. They danced to the sounds of a specific drum performed by specialists. The arrangement of the dancers was similar to the mbeleka dance. The interesting thing about these marriage dances was that while the people were dancing, the father of the newly married girl went round the dancers at regular intervals, warning them not to do evil things (sexual activity) while dancing. He did not want immoral activity at the wedding of his daughter. When the Ngoni colonised the Tumbuka, they replaced these dances with their own daytime kraal dances. However, uzamba remained undisturbed by the Ngoni and is still practised to this day. The Lakeshore Tonga did practise mkocho and mbeleka dances up to the era after Second European War.

THE MTUPA CLAIM

As explained above, after marriage was sanctioned and all marriage rituals completed, the man began living with his wife in the wife's village. That was the custom of the matrilineal Tumbuka. The children born belonged to the wife's family. Unfortunately, if a child died, nasty things happened to the man. First, the wife was told to sit in the house with the dead body of her child held in her hands on her lap. The body was not allowed to touch the ground. If it did, that was an additional offence for the man. The wife sat like that until her husband's family (or himself) paid her family the mtupa claim. The mtupa claim was *compensation* to the wife's family for the death of the child or any member of her nucleus family. Only after this was paid did the burial arrangements begin. The woman's family prepared the body for burial. Second, there was another payment by the husband or his

clan before the body was taken out of the funeral house for burial. At the graveyard, just before the body was put in the grave, the husband or his clan members made additional payment to the family of the wife.

If the wife died, the situation was even worse for the husband's clan. At times, the deceased wife's family even attacked the husband's family, a situation that initiated small but vicious interclan war. The husband was told to sit in the house with the body of his wife on his lap until his clan settled the mtupa claim. After settling the mtupa claim, burial arrangements were initiated. Such payments were made twice—before the body left the house and just before the body was lowered in the grave for burial. If the husband died while living together with his wife in *his own* village, his wife's family was not charged mtupa claim. However, if he died while living together with his wife in *her parents'* village, his wife's family paid mtupa claim to the family of her deceased husband. The mtupa claim for the death of a woman was always more than the mtupa claim for the death of a child or a man. This is because a woman—not a man—gives birth to children. For this reason, she was more important and valuable to her family than the husband.

The mtupa litigation was abolished in the Tumbuka society by the British administration in 1908. From that year, the *full marriage payments* to the girl's family became the norm in the Tumbuka society. Such full payments transferred the *rights* over the *marriage* and *children* from the girl's family to the husband's family. The marriages from that year made the husband remain in his parents' village with his wife, whom he brought from her parents' village. This rare positive interference by the British administration was one of the strongest factors that *drove* the Tumbuka into the Ngoni custom *lobola* (transfer), the *transferring of cattle* from the boy's family to the girl's family. The cattle were at that time in the Tumbuka society considered to be *more valuable items to be used and transferred as marriage payments* from the family of a boy marrying a girl to the family of the girl being married.

The banning of mtupa claim was a fundamental cultural change in the Tumbuka society. From 1908 to date, the husband's family in the Tumbuka society has continued assuming both control and possession of the wife and the children. To the Tumbuka, lobola

or *ukulobola* was an overthrow by the male sex in the society of the primitive or ancient female dominance by paying redemptive (redemptory) equilibrium payment in *cattle*. The change from the use of *other valuable items* in marriage payments in the pre-Ngoni era to the use of *cattle* during the Ngoni domination was definitely a result of the Tumbuka imitating the Ngoni culture of using cattle in their marriage custom. In the new system, the only thing that the girl's (wife) parents assumed was the redemptive payment of lobola. The new system of equal settlement created *essential* equality between the two groups—the wife's and husband's families. This issue is also discussed separately in detail below under Marriage and Redemptive Payments.[77]

MARRIAGE DURING THE BALOWOKA ERA

The Balowoka did not encourage the system of arranged marriages they found in practice among the Tumbuka in the M'nyanjagha Kingdom. The Balowoka encouraged and practised marriage by personal choice. Initially, few Tumbuka clans in Nkhamanga region of the M'nyanjagha Kingdom imitated the way the Balowoka organised their marriages. By the mid nineteenth century, many Tumbuka clans in Nkhamanga followed the way the Balowoka conducted their marriages. The manner in which the Balowoka arranged their marriages was in many ways very *similar* to the Tumbuka marriages, especially the marriage *by personal choice*. The major difference was on where the husband lived after the marriage was sealed.

As a matrilineal society, the Tumbuka followed the *matrilocal* system, whereby from the wedding day, the husband moved from his village to live with his wife in the village of the wife's family. The Balowoka did not do this. Being a patrilineal society, they observed a *patrilocal* system, where the husband only *briefly* lived with his wife in the village

---

[77] For more details on the issues discussed under mtupa and marriage and redemptive payments, read chapters 5 to 7 in Young, *Notes on the Customs and Folk-lore of the Tumbuka–Kamanga Peoples*, pp. 56–93.

of the wife's family. After a few years, the husband, together with his wife and children, left his parents-in-law's village permanently to live in his family's village.

Since the Balowoka had come to stay in the Nkhamanga region and had to marry the native Tumbuka women, a form of 'compromise marriage arrangement' was mutually reached. As a result of this blending of the two different marriage customs, new practices emerged, and new marriage terminologies came into use. The changes were more pronounced in Nkhamanga region than in the areas far away from Nkhamanga. As a result of this, people in areas that were not affected by the Balowoka influence, practised ancient Tumbuka marriage arrangements and procedures. That is to say, the further away the place was from central Nkhamanga, the less affected it was by the Balowoka marriage customs and vice versa. Those affected by the Balowoka practised a combination of the Tumbuka and Balowoka marriage customs, especially in Nkhamanga area. The 'combined or blended' system of marriage arrangement was again negatively affected later in the nineteenth century by the influences of the Senga and Ngoni (discussed below). This is how bad the Tumbuka marriage system has been affected since the arrival of the newcomers in the M'nyanjagha Kingdom.

After the girl accepted his marriage proposal, the boy informed his male family elders, who quickly began arranging the marriage procedures. First, the boy's family organised the chijula mulomo, after which they had to pay the *first* instalment of chimalo (also called *chuma cha pa mwana*—that is, goods or assets on account of a child). There was no fixed amount for the *first* instalment of the chimalo. Usually, the first instalment comprised three traditionally manufactured hoes, plus a bundle of native cotton. These were always *carried* in a bag (*thumba*) made from the goatskin by the thenga of the boy's family to the family of the girl. This is probably why up to date the chimalo, whether in the form of money or cattle, is sometimes called thumba by the Tumbuka.

The girl's family received the initial chimalo instalment. The hoes were each examined in silence. The hoes were put aside, but the cotton was put back in the bag and handed back to the thenga. The acceptance of the hoes by the girl's family meant that the marriage was sanctioned.

However, putting the cotton back in the bag and handing it to the thenga meant that the initial instalment received by the girl's family was not adequate and that more was required. Indeed, after some time, the boy's family organised another hoe and sent it to the girl's family the usual way. Each time the cotton and the bag were returned to the boy's family meant that the girl's side wanted more payments. But the time when the *cotton* and the *bag* were not sent back to the boy's family meant that the girl's family was happy and all the chimalo payments were henceforth completed; marriage proceedings could begin thereafter.

Elderly women from the girl's village came to the boy's village to announce the date of the marriage ceremony to be held in the girl's village. Before this date, the boy, with his colleague's assistance, had already begun working for the parents-in-law in their village. The first time he went to work, he carried beads as presents to the girl's family. The presents were called *mboni*. The thenga presented them to the girl's family. After work, the girl's family presented him with a chicken or a goat. During this period, the boy did not build a house in the girl's village. After some time, he went back to his village.

However, after a few months, the boy went back to the girl's village. This was a reconnaissance trip trying to scrutinise his girl's community. On arrival in the evening, members of the girl's family met him at the outskirts of the village. As he entered the village, he used the slow processional steps. Each time he moved forward, he was given some presents until he reached the house where he was led and told to spend a night. Before he entered into the house, he was given some more presents in the doorway. That day, he did not see his wife, and the following day, he left for his village without meeting his wife.

Two months after his visit to the girl's village, his family sent some goats to the girl's family. If the goats were accepted, then the boy was told to get ready to go and collect his wife from her village. That was also the time when the women from the girl's village came to the boy's village, announcing the day of the grand wedding.

Some days before the wedding celebrations, the bazamba in the girl's village began instructing (teaching) the girl in various aspects of

life. If she was a rude girl in the community, that was the time the women punished her for her behaviour. They did that by pinching, pricking, and scratching her with nails, normally inside of the thighs (*mu nthapatapa*), *kumu chikibula na njobe, chikibu!* The first uzamba ceremony was done a few weeks before the girl went into marriage. The *second* uzamba ceremony was specifically done for the purpose of the *actual* 'entering' into marriage.

One morning, a few days before the marriage celebrations, the girl was taken out of the uzamba house to be bathed, shaved, anointed, and readied for the marriage. After getting her ready, the bazamba carried the girl to a nearby bush for a physical (and 'medical') examination. There, she was thoroughly checked to ascertain her virginity just before marriage. That was a very tense moment for her family, her clan, and the whole village community. If there was singing from the bush by the bazamba, it meant that indeed the girl was a *virgin* and ready for marriage without fear. She had passed the virginity test.

On hearing the bazamba singing, the people in the village who were waiting anxiously responded by saying: 'Chuma talya makola, mwe!' This is translated as: 'We have eaten the goods or assets all correct!' What they meant was that now that the girl has passed the virginity test, the girl's clan can share the chuma cha pa mwana (or chimalo) payments from the boy's family without any worries of their daughter being rejected on account of not being a virgin. She passed an important test in the marriage procedures. If the women proved that she was not a virgin, there was no singing from the bush. That raised a case against the girl's clan. For the wedding to take place and for everything else to continue as planned, the girl's family quickly paid the fine to the boy's family. If they found out that the one who deflowered her was the boy marrying her, then he was severely rebuked, and his family paid the girl's family heavily for the offence. If she mentioned another man, then the named man also paid heavily to the girl's family, which also ultimately paid the boy's family.

If all went well, the women of the girl's village went to the boy's village to announce the date of the marriage celebrations. The boy was told by the elders to prepare two things before going to the girl's village.

These were a mat for his parents-in-law and barkcloth for his wife. The barkcloth was handed over to the bazamba from the girl's village that welcomed the group from the boy's village as they entered the village. The bazamba clothed the wife prior to coming out of the house where she had been receiving intensive training and advice on aspects of married life from the village bazamba. The final advice-giving ceremony was conducted publicly outside the house where the couple would be living thereafter. All well-wishers came and publicly gave the couple advice on how to live together and how to live in the community. It was also at this ceremony that the couple was administered with medicine for faithfulness called *mulumila*. In the future, the medicine was usually an argument against breaking up the marriage. The affected one would say, 'Did you not take mulumila in the presence of everybody? Why then do you want to leave me now?' After this ceremony, all went to dance and participate in the celebrations throughout the day and night.

For a few years, the man lived together with his wife in the village of his wife's family. That was called ukweni. Practically the term *mukweni* meant 'son-in-law' as opposed to *mukamwana*, 'daughter-in-law'. The son-in-law was generally known as the mukweni of the parents-in-law, of the wife's family, and also generally as the mukweni of the people of the village. If the couple lived in the boy's village, the same would be true for the mukamwana.

After some years in the wife's village, the man decided to go back to his village together with his wife and children, carrying all his belongings. That movement was a diplomatic *kusompola* ('snatching' away the wife with 'authority' from her parents). Thereafter, the couple lived in the husband's village forever. That was a *change* from the *original* Tumbuka matrilocal system of marriage to a Balowoka patrilocal system of marriage. It remained this way forever.[78]

---

[78] This was the situation when the Ngoni entered Tumbuka land. Thereafter, it was the Ngoni who destroyed the last vestiges of the matrilineal marriage practices. They enforced the existing Balowoka patrilineal marriage practices.

In 1908, when mtupa claim was banned, the Tumbuka also joined the Balowoka by practising patrilocal marriages. The couple's children belonged to the husband of the *patrilineal* Balowoka community and not to the Tumbuka wife's uncle as it were prior to the arrival of the Balowoka. By imitating the Balowoka in their marriage practices, it did not mean in any way that the Tumbuka had abandoned their matrilineal position. They still went on as a matrilineal society, with the exception of some people; mainly, only those living within the Balowoka regions or living closer to them adopted the Balowoka marriage systems. Later, the *new* system became the *norm* in the Tumbuka society, especially after 1908. However, it still *did not* mean that by *origin* and culture the Tumbuka were patrilineal. They were and still are matrilineal although some had changed for *political convenience* to the patrilineal system. It is very important to *note* here that the *change* only observed patrilineal inheritance of property and patrilocal marriages, but the hereditary political power continued to be inherited matrilineally. The Tumbuka people must clearly understand this point to avoid any future confusion as to whether they are matrilineal or patrilineal. The truth is that the true Tumbuka have always known that they are a matrilineal people.

A few weeks after the kusompola, the wife went back to her family. In her village, she prepared small bracelets of grass beads or modern beads. These were her farewell presents to her bazamba, peers, mother, and father's sister. She personally put each of these bracelets on the wrist of each of the people she bade farewell to. The farewell ritual was called *kuwinga* (or *kubinga*), 'weaning'. After the farewell ritual, the woman returned to her husband's village.

MARRIAGES DURING THE NGONI ERA

The Ngoni were the last group of Africans to colonise the Tumbuka before the British came to colonise Central Africa at the end of the nineteenth century. The Ngoni arrived in the middle of the nineteenth century. They brought and introduced their own cultural practices relating to marriage. In the process, they modified the existing

Tumbuka–Balowoka (Tumbuwoka) marriage practices. In the end, marriage practices in the Ngoni era were a combination of all the *three* in a modified way. Thus, today, marriage practices are a combination of a large proportion from the Ngoni, a small proportion from the Balowoka, and another small proportion from the Tumbuka. We can therefore accurately talk of the *Tungoka* (Tumbuka, Ngoni, and Balowoka combined) marriage customs currently in practice in the Tumbuka land. In the foregoing paragraphs, we have discussed the marriage ceremonies during the era of the Balowoka. What changes did the Ngoni people bring into the marriage customs?

The Ngoni practised marriage by personal choice. A man who reached the marrying age looked for a girl of marriageable age. The Ngoni were *very strict* on marrying or getting married at the right age. Once the man and the woman agreed to marry, they told their respective relatives about their intention to marry. That was to let their respective relatives start marriage procedures leading to their legal union in marriage.

The man informed a member of the family from the patrilineal *gogo* house, the house of the patrilineal grandparents. In many cases, it was the patrilineal grandfather. It was him who informed the man's father about his son's plans to marry. The man marrying is by tradition not allowed to tell his father directly about his intentions to marry.

The father of the man intending to marry chose one elder from the patrilineal gogo house, such as a patrilineal grandfather or elder cousin, to be the family's go-between, *nkhoswe* (what the Tumbuka called thenga). He was responsible for the efficient accomplishment of the marriage arrangements and procedures. He represented the man's father in the marriage discussions with the girl's family. In all, he was a very important man who commanded respect and had great experience in marriage issues. He also knew the traditions of the Ngoni thoroughly.

The go-between went to the girl's family to inform them about the man's marriage intentions. The meeting took place in a house. The first meeting was normally very brief. Before he said anything to the parents

of the girl, he put some money in a small plate or container covers with another small plate or container of equal size. He then gave it to the representative of girl's family, his counterpart. The payment for starting the talks was and still is extremely important. It was a mouth-opener, *chijula mulomo*, and without it, talks could not start. The man's nkhoswe waited until the plates were collected, symbolising that permission is granted for him to start talking with them on the *marriage issue*.

After the brief talks, the girl's family representative told the man's nkhoswe to come on a specific date for an answer from the girl's family. He left the house and went back to report to the man's family. He also waited up to the set date to go back to the girl's village to resume the talks. On the appointed day, the go-betweens from both families met again at the village of the girl's parents. That time, the girl's parents called the girl and asked her in the presence of the nkhoswe from the man's family. The purpose of calling her was to ascertain if she indeed knew the man and that they agreed to marry. The girl's own words or response had to be heard and confirmed by the man's nkhoswe in the presence of the other nkhoswe. If her answer was negative, then the discussions there and then discontinued. But if the answer was positive, the discussions continued. The go-between went back to report the good news to the man's family.

The next stage was for the man to send an engagement token, chikhole, to the girl through his go-between. A chikhole assured the girl that the man was serious and meant business. After that, the girl's family asked for *kacheka* from the man. This was a second small token after chikhole from the man. However, the kacheka was specifically for the girl's mother in appreciation for having given birth to her and raised her well. After the kacheka payment, the girl's family demanded for the main marriage payment from the man's family. It was called chimalo.

The next thing to do was for the man's family to send an animal (cattle) to the girl's family. The beast was called *mfuko* (the 'snuffbox' beast). It was a gift from the man's father to the girl, his future daughter-in-law. When taking the beast to the girl's family, the man's go-between went with many companions, but none of them was an immediate family relative of the groom.

The beast was killed at the girl's village and was used for a *betrothal* feast in the same village. That was like a modern engagement party. At the end of the betrothal ceremony, the girl's parents and some elderly people of the village said, 'We have snuffed.'

After the betrothal ceremony was the *vipheko* ceremony. This was the time when the girl's family prepared beer and different types of food. These were taken to the man's family amidst singing and ululating. When the man's family returned the empty food containers to the girl's family, they put some gifts in each container in appreciation of the different types of food they enjoyed. That was very similar to what the Bemba people of Northern Zambia (the traditional cousins of all people in eastern Zambia and Northern Malawi) practise, and they call such a ceremony *chilanga mulilo*.

The main marriage payment consisted *mainly* of cattle, and the number of cattle to go to the girl's family depended on, among other things, the status of the girl's family. However, ordinarily, the lobola payments, the transfer of cattle from the man's family to the girl's family (what the Tumbuka called *malobolo*), consisted of cattle, with the numbers ranging from three to any number. Normally, royal clans paid lobola ranging from fifteen cattle upwards. Once lobola was paid, the next stage was for the man's family to ask for the *bride* to join the *groom* in the man's village. That was accepted, and preparations for the big wedding commenced. A lavish wedding ceremony, *m'thimba* was organised by both families. It was a disgrace to both families, but much more to the girl's family, if the girl became pregnant before the wedding day. It was also a serious offence punishable by a heavy fine. The man responsible, whether the 'husband' or not, was charged a fee known as *chidumo*. This had to be paid before further marriage arrangements could proceed.

M'thimba was announced by the man's parents after the main marriage payment was paid. The gogo house of the man's family sent a message to the gogo house of the girl's family, informing them of the date for the wedding. They were invited to go to the man's village. Once the date was known, both families started preparing for the big occasion.

Many weeks before the wedding day, the bride was thoroughly trained in what was expected of her in married life. They made sure that they sent a well-instructed wife who will not embarrass them by failing to live up to the expected standards set by the Ngoni society. Experienced elderly women were her trainers. The training session is known as *ukuconga*. At this time, the bride is referred to as *umlobokazi*, 'the bride'.

And on a well-selected day, the bride is taken to the *indhlunkulu* in the village, where the leading women in marriage affairs—in many cases, her father's mother and her father's sisters—give her final instructions on how to behave in her new home. During such instructions, the girl is supposed to 'weep'. Her mother is also supposed to 'weep' as a sign of moral support for her daughter.

On the morning of the day they left for the wedding, the umlobokazi was dressed in freshly prepared skins. Her hair was arranged in the *isihlutu* (chignon) style, to which the gall bladder of a goat was pinned. The gall bladder of a cow was tied to her elbow. Together with the bride's age-mates, very close elderly female relatives (such as aunts), and some men, they left for the groom's village. A lot of beer was carried to the man's village for this occasion. The young men of the bride's party drove a bull specifically for this occasion. It was called *m'canda* (*m'tyando*), and it was a present from the girl's family to the man's family. That was the first time the bride's family and friends were officially going to see and meet the husband's family.

As a custom, the bride's party waited by the gate of the kraal, ululating and singing m'thimba songs and in praise of the bride's clan. That was their announcement to the groom's family that they had arrived. The young men driving the bull entered the kraal first and then are followed by the whole group. Shortly thereafter, they began dancing in the kraal. After some time, the elderly women of the village came and greeted them. They were followed by men who came and greeted the visitors, and they later gathered by the indhlunkulu, the 'central royal house of the senior advisor'.

Meanwhile, the bride remained at the road on the outskirts of the village with the chief women, waiting to be collected by the elderly

women from the man's family. The bride walked a few steps and stopped. She performed the slow processional steps. She only moved on after she got gifts from the elderly women from the man's family. That went on until the bride and her chief women entered the kraal. Then the bridal party began to sing with their heads bowed. Their chief m'thimba woman (similar to a modern wedding matron) came forward, bending low on her knees, and presented to the induna (councillor) of the indhlunkulu of the husband's village a basket containing snuffboxes and beads. She also made a short speech, saying, 'Here is our child who is now leaving her home . . . She has no father now . . . We expect you to cherish her now as her father would.' The process of entering into the groom's village and presenting the basket containing snuffboxes was called *ukugandisa*. The action of *coming* and *offering* beer and other presents to the husband's village from the girl's parents is known as *mungenisa khaya* (officially letting her enter the groom's village). The ceremony was done to allow the bride to gain entry into her *new* village, her husband's village, and in the process be officially welcomed by her husband's relatives. The *actual* entry into the village is called *kungena khaya*.

In response to the woman's short speech, the induna assured them, 'Now that she is here, we will cherish her, but she must respect the owner of this house and be under him in all things.' After this, the men of the village took one snuff simultaneously. The bridal party and the villagers all remained seated and began to sing *umbedlo* songs, which are songs sang while seated. In the evening, the bridal party was offered accommodation and slept in the village.

The following morning, the bridal party started dancing in the kraal, while the husband's family killed a beast for the m'thimba feast. The women of the village joined the visitors in the kraal, dancing with them. The leader of the women of the village who joined the visitors took the husband's spear, which she brought in when entering the kraal, and used it to pat the bride gently on the shoulder. That was a sign that the bride was now one of the women of the village. It was a public warm welcome for the bride. The correct response from the bridal party was to turn their backs and weep to show their grief because she had left them by joining the groom's family. Dancing

continued until the night when the bride's party, as per tradition, took the bride to the husband's house and left her there. That was the first time the couple slept together.

The following morning, before the bridal party returned home, the bride went to the door of the house of her husband and called out the praise names of *her* father. She then sang the praise songs, *ummekezo*, while the husband stood in the doorway behind her. He then went into the kraal and sat down, facing the bridal party that was also singing.

The bride came into the kraal with a gourd of water. That time, there was total silence while she poured water for him to wash his hands, mouth, and eyes. That was the first public act of service for the husband after consummation of the marriage, and it marked the end of the main part of the m'thimba ceremony, after which the bridal party went back to their home, leaving the bride behind. The bridal party carried all the clothes that the bride was using up to this time so that the husband can prepare or buy her new ones.

After this, there were three more ceremonies performed for the new wife by the women of the village. The first one took place about two days after the departure of the bridal party. It was an occasion for her husband's relatives to give the wife specific instructions and advice. She sat on a mat by the indhlunkulu, while the chief woman of the house styled her hair in the isihlutu, anointed her with oil, and dressed her in fresh skins and new beads taken from the store of the house to which she now belonged. They then instructed her on how to behave to the old and the young. That was the moment when presents or a piece of advice or instructions were given to her by each one of the women.

The second ceremony took place about forty days after the first one. It was called *ukufumisa umlobokazi*, 'bringing the wife out'. All the time since she came from her village, she has been 'sitting' by her house under surveillance. She was being watched by other elderly women of the house, she ate a little, and her food was prepared by her mother-in-law. She spoke to those who gave her gifts. The second ceremony gives her the right to go anywhere and talk with anyone. She could help

her mother-in-law by fetching firewood and lighting the fire for her. She was also given some kitchen utensils. For example, a pot of water and an axe for cutting firewood were given to her. Her mother-in-law gave her the *indhlekuza* bead, a sign that she may *speak and eat* in the presence of her parents-in-law.

The bride went through a number of tests during this period. For instance, she had to fetch a huge bundle of split wood and lay it down in front of her mother-in-law's house without dropping any. Since the bundle was on her head, it meant kneeling down and bending forward slowly until she gently eased the bundle of wood on the ground. Other tests included shelling large quantities of maize (or any edible cereal), soaking them, and pounding them into stamped maize (or nat edible cereal) known as *izinkobe*. These tests were collectively called *ukulinga umlobokazi*, 'watching the new wife'. That life was far more exacting than anything she had been made to do in her own village.

The final ceremony was the *ukupekisa umlobokazi*, 'integration of the bride'. The ceremony recognised the new wife's *house* as the starting point of a *new* house. It was a ceremony of making fire in her new house to cook food for her husband. This is how it was done: About three months after the wedding, a woman from her father-in-law's paternal gogo house suddenly appeared in the doorway of the new wife's house, carrying three hearthstones. She fetched firewood, kindled it, and began cooking maize or edible cereal. The young wife, very astonished, was supposed to weep because she had now been turned away from her mother-in-law's cooking place. The cooked maize (or other cereal) on the first fire in the new house was divided into portions and taken to each section of the village 'attached' to the *house*.

The young wife sat near the woman who had prepared the maize (or other cereal) being distributed, showing grief. But in the end, she became so excited that a few days later, she made a trip back to her own village to tell her parents the good news. The response of her own people was to prepare food for a feast in the new village of the girl. They brought the food to her new village to express to her father-in-law's family their sincere happiness and appreciation for the token of confidence they had in the girl and her ability to cook for her husband.

That marked the end of the marriage procedures among the Ngoni, a virilocal society, just like the Balowoka.

The second malobolo came some years later. It was the payment for the children born in the family so that they could traditionally and legally belong to the man. It was paid in cattle, usually one cow per child and one bull for all the children. If the wife could not produce children, there was no second malobolo. To this effect, the girl's parents asked the man if he still loved the girl and wanted the marriage to continue. If he says *yes*, then they asked him if he wanted a second wife to bear children on behalf of his first barren wife. If he accepted, then a second wife from his wife's family was given to him. As stated earlier on, this woman is known as *hlanzi* in Ngoni and mbiliya in Tumbuka. When the second wife produced children, her family demanded the second malobolo from her husband's family.

Small marriage payments like chamulomo, chikhole, kacheka, chidumo, and the *second* main malobolo were not refundable if they divorced. However, the first malobolo was refundable if they divorce due to the woman's fault. If the man was unable to pay the second malobolo, his wife's family took charge of the marriage arrangements and marriage payments of the couple's eldest daughter. That way, the couple's eldest daughter helped the father to pay the second malobolo. From that time, all the children belonged to the husband. If the husband died before paying the second malobolo, the relatives took up the responsibility and paid. If they did not, then the tradition allowed the girl's relatives to claim back the children. But if the wife died before the husband finished paying the second malobolo, then he lost the children, and on top of that, he had to pay *mlumo* (chamulomo) in the form of a bull.

MARRIAGE AND REDEMPTIVE PAYMENTS

There is always confusion surrounding the customary marriage payments in the African society. Modern scholars, especially those specialising in gender studies, have commented negatively on the marriage payments in African societies. This point was made clear in

the book *Traditional Marriages in Zambia*, and it is being emphasised here again.[79] In the Tumbuka society, the marriage payment 'was in no sense (and still is not) the "purchase" of a girl. It was not a wife who was bought but the husband's freedom, and the freedom of his family from liability for mtupa payments. The freedom included full rights over the children of the marriage. It was in fact, a redemption payment [*kuombola*] and at the same time it preserved an equilibrium, between the two independent groups. Those who parted with a girl and all types of increase [children] through her, received in exchange, that which put it in their power to acquire from another group, and without loss to themselves a wife for one of their sons and all rights of increase [children] through her. . . . 'It was a token, that one community gave up a valuable member [the girl] in witness whereof the receiving community [the boy's] transferred such a quantity of goods as was considered sufficient to restore the equilibrium.' [80]

From the foregoing paragraph, it is thus appropriate to call the marriage payments as redemptive or equilibrium payment *and not a bride price or dowry*. Therefore, *kuombola* (or redemptive payment) was, as already stated above, an overthrow mechanism by the male gender of female dominance by the *redemptive or equilibrium payment*.

---

[79] Read Yizenge A. Chondoka, introduction in *Traditional Marriages in Zambia: A Study in Cultural History* (Ndola: The Mission Press, 1988).

[80] Young, *Notes on the Customs and Folk-lore of the Tumbuka–Kamanga Peoples*, pp. 70–71.

CHAPTER SEVEN

OTHER TRADITIONAL PRACTICES

MWAVI ORDEAL

In any society, people offend each other in many ways. The authorities put in place mechanisms of punishing the offenders. The type of punishment varies according to the gravity of the offence. Among the Tumbuka, the most common way of trying the offenders was by using the *mwavi* ordeal. *Mwavi* is a term for a ritual *trial* administered on suspected offenders in order to prove them innocent or guilty of the offence they are accused to have committed. Originally, mwavi was *mainly* administered to people suspected of practicing witchcraft or people who were accused of being adulterous in the community. There were two types of mwavi—namely *mwavi wa khuni* and *mwavi wa maji*. The local chief or headman asked experts in the preparation of mwavi to prepare it whenever the need arose in the community.

Mwavi wa khuni (mwavi from the *tree*) was made from a poisonous bark of a specific tree. The bark was removed from the tree, dried, and pounded to powder. The powder was mixed with water, and the mixture was put on *chande*, a small traditional plate made from dried gourd. The mixture was administered to the people in the dispute. The mixture was *not* boiled. The mwavi wa khuni could also be administered by proxy. That is, instead of administering it to the people in dispute, it could be administered to a dove, a chicken,

or a dog chosen by the people in the dispute. As stated above, the chief or headman appointed the person to administer the mwavi. The appointment had to be *agreed by both groups* in the dispute. The administrator was chosen for each mwavi session, and at the time of the session, the chosen administrator was called kazembe. Mwavi was administered either at the chief's house or the headman's house. It was also common to have mwavi sessions at the village *mphala* (courtyard or forum of justice), a place in the village where men were usually found doing men's tasks and discussing men's and village matters, including disputes. Children were the only ones not allowed at the mwavi sessions.

There were two methods of administering mwavi wa khuni. In the direct method, the accused would be asked to drink the concoction from the chande. If he or she was innocent, he or she would survive the ordeal by vomiting it. But if he/she was the guilty one, he/she would die after drinking the mwavi. In the proxy method, the kazembe used two small white (holy!) chickens (or dogs). Each chicken came from the two sides in the dispute. The chickens were given mwavi to drink. The chicken from the guilty person died after drinking mwavi served on the chande. The chicken from the innocent person survived.

Mwavi wa maji (water test) was another type of mwavi. A vessel of water was put on a fire. At the centre of the vessel was placed a pebble. The water in the vessel was boiled for a short time. A person from one side of the people in dispute was asked to dip his or her hand and forearm into the boiling water in the vessel and collect the pebble. He or she removed the pebble from the bottom of the vessel and held it for a moment for all present to see before he or she replaced it at the bottom of the vessel. Another person, someone from the other side of the people in dispute did the same. If the hand, wrist, or arm showed blisters, then that person was guilty of the offence. If blisters did not show, then the person was not guilty. No method was considered better than the other.

Mwavi was always carried out on both the accused and the accuser. If the accused was found guilty of the serious offence of being a *witch/*

wizard, she/he died after drinking mwavi. But if, for some reasons, the accused did not die immediately after taking mwavi, the people in the community secretly killed her/him. Whether the one found guilty died immediately after drinking mwavi or died a few hours later (or first survived the ordeal but was killed later as was normally the case of a witch or wizard), the innocent person was quickly compensated by the guilty one or his/her family. For the innocent man, a woman was given to him as compensation for being wrongly accused. For the innocent woman, three goats or six hoes (or a piece of land) were given to her as compensation for being wrongly accused. Presents were also given to those who administered the mwavi. Before the introduction of the mwavi in the Tumbuka society, a sharp bough was hammered through the person proved guilty of being a witch, wizard, or any criminal offence in society.

MDULO

Kujungula is directly connected with *mdulo* in the Tumbuka society. Kujungula is defined as 'socially enjoined behaviour'. Failure to conform to the socially enjoined behaviour, or failure to comply to kujungula, always leads to mdulo. Traditionally, mdulo is a concept that describes a cough similar to severe tuberculosis (TB) that produces blood. Traditionally, there are many causes of mdulo, each one based on different circumstances. For instance, when a husband is a womanizer and flirts with many women while his wife is pregnant, the wife will suffer from *mdulo wa mapinga*—that is, the mdulo will cause the child to take a breech position in the womb. She is likely to die in labour while giving birth. Here, *mapinga* (the breech position of the child in her mother's womb) suggests that the child is not happy with the father's activities. The child may be born alive, but the mother may die while giving birth. For her to survive the mdulo wa mapinga and give birth normally, she is given medicine before she gives birth. The medicine will counter the power of mdulo wa mapinga.

The same happens if the pregnant woman, usually unmarried, met several men before becoming pregnant. She will suffer from mdulo wa

mapinga and will die in labour of her own child. Mapinga suggests that the child in the mother's womb is not happy with the activities of the mother. For her not to die in labour, she must first of all mention the names of all the men she slept with to the traditional midwives (*muzamba*) just before childbirth. Once this is done, she is given medicine to have a smooth childbirth. If she slept with many men and she could not remember all their names, then the elderly women subjected her to a special ritual. She was asked to bring a shallow grain-sieving handbasket (*luselo)* with either millet or sorghum in it. She was then asked to orderly spread or scatter the grain within the luselo with her hand (fingers), and while doing this, she was asked to say the following: 'I have slept with as many men as the number of the seeds in this luselo.' She would thereafter give birth normally. The ritual she performed prevented her from dying of mdulo wa mapinga. The belief was that if she did not perform the ritual, she would die of mdulo wa mapinga.

If a woman delivers a baby without problems but thereafter the husband sleeps with other women, the child will suffer from a cough called *mdulo wa moto*. This is because the cough hurts like fire (*moto*) in the chest. Soon thereafter, the child dies from mdulo wa moto. If medicine is not found and administered quickly, all other children in the family will catch the mdulo wa moto and may die. They will be coughing terribly and will have swollen limbs. If a woman has a child and is married to a polygamist, she is usually advised to take medicine before she begins sleeping with him. This is done for the safety of the child who otherwise would catch the mdulo wa moto.

Traditionally, after childbirth, the woman is forbidden to put salt in any relish (*dende*). She is considered not fit to do that because she is culturally unclean. If she has children at home, they will be the ones she will be asking to put an already measured amount of salt in the relish at an appropriate time. Normally, after childbirth, the woman is also not allowed to prepare any meals. This is because in addition to the reasons mentioned earlier on, she is also considered tired and weak for such tasks at home. She is supposed to be doing simpler tasks of just looking after the newborn child (*bonda*).

If she begins putting salt in the relish before the child is a month old, those eating the relish will suffer from mdulo. Some parts of their bodies will swell. However, during pregnancy, the woman is allowed to prepare any food and put salt in any relish. She will not cause or suffer mdulo of any kind. There is an exception to this 'salt' taboo. When the affected woman puts tomato, water, groundnut powder, or onion in the relish, the mdulo does not act upon anyone who eats such food. This is because *these items* are not salt. Mdulo only affects salt.

The other time when a woman can cause mdulo is when she is undergoing menstrual periods. During this time, she is considered culturally unclean and is therefore not allowed to cook unless she has nobody to help her, which is very rare in a traditional society. She is also not permitted to put salt in the relish. If she contravenes these cultural regulations, she will cause people eating the food to suffer from mdulo.

There is also mdulo connected with funerals. The relatives of the deceased were given medicine before the deceased was buried; otherwise, the whole family could suffer from mdulo if this was not done. The medicine protected the relatives from catching mdulo after the funeral was over.

UZAMBA CEREMONY

In reality, the uzamba ceremony was and still is an initiation ceremony for a girl who has come of age. It is an instructional dance performed by elderly women in the community. The ceremony is performed indoors, in an uzamba house, and mainly performed *before* the girl under instruction. It is also one of the marriage dances in the Tumbuka society. The instructions focus on marriage, adult life, and how to live in the society. The instructions convey certain lessons about life in the society, and such data are always transmitted from generation to generation by word of mouth. The uzamba dance emphasises on swaying of the waist, which is characteristic of specific instructions associated with married life. The uzamba dance can also

be performed even if there is no girl to instruct. The elderly women in the community perform the dance as an entertainment for the *adult* females only in the community. That is because uzamba is a dance exclusively for women.

At the age of eleven, a girl moved out of her mother's house to join other older girls in the *mphala ya basungwana*, a house specifically for girls above ten years.[81] Normally, a girl came of age between eleven and fourteen years old. The first sign that she had come of age was the first flow of blood from her private parts. This was her first menstrual period in her life, and for this reason, she got surprised and frightened about what was happening to her body and rushed into the bush, *never* to her parents. That was a method of announcing her first menstrual flow. She was quickly fetched by the elderly women (bazamba) and brought back into the village.

Once her first monthly period was confirmed by the elderly women, the girl was quickly isolated from others and began lessons about hygiene during the subsequent menstrual periods. She was also told about the taboos associated with the menstrual periods in the society. The *women cultural experts* who taught the girl about the initiation ceremony and all that went with it were called bazamba. While in seclusion, the girl was fed saltless food mixed with the appropriate medicine. It was taboo to take salt at this time. If she did, she would suffer some form of mdulo.

During training at the initiation ceremony in the uzamba house, the girl was smeared with coloured clay all over her body, decorated with beads of various colours, and remained naked with only a small cloth

---

[81] When the Ngoni occupied the Tumbuka territory, they brought their own name for this institution. Hence, the Tumbuka term *mphala ya basungwana* was eventually replaced with the Ngoni name *nthanganeni* and is the only one known and in use today. *Mphala ya banyamata* was for the boys. For the Ngoni, *laweni* is the equivalent of nthanganeni for the boys. But as stated earlier on, such institutions were not there in the pre-Ngoni and pre-Balowoka eras. More details on this under the subheading Institution of Nthanganeni in the subsequent pages.

covering her front below the waist and another small cloth covering her behind below the waist. Only women were allowed to enter the uzamba house where the ceremony was taking place either to attend or participate in the ceremony. The bazamba made a beautiful big circle, *chikuse,* from soils of different bright colours. This was the circle the girl who came of age (or the initiate), mwali, was told to jump across it in her sit-up position from time to time, as required by the bazamba in preparation for the main uzamba ceremony a week later.

During the one-week training period, the girl was called *mwali wa lisumba* (the girl who has come of age and as innocent as an egg). Her parents started preparing beer to be ready on the day of the ceremony, which was also the day when she came out of seclusion. She would sit up and be asked to jump across the beautiful circle several times. She also did other tasks pertaining to the ceremony. All the tasks were undertaken during the time when specific uzamba *songs* and *drums* were in progress. As stated earlier on, the physical training focused on swaying movements of the waist (*kumu denyeska mu luwunda*). Training went on for a week, after which she was taken out of the uzamba house.

On the last day, the mwali was removed out of the uzamba house and taken straight to the river, where she was bathed and shaved by the bazamba. She was also anointed with oil and tied with local or European beads round the waist and the neck. On the trip to the river, the bazamba carried a small pot of beer that they hid in the nearby bush just before the river. After preparing her for the main uzamba ceremony, the girl was hoisted on one of the women's (bazamba) shoulders back to the village.

As they went to the village, the women sang a song that went like this:

> Solo yati cheke cheke cheke**.**
>
> Yaona uchi**.**
>
> (The honey guide has called. Cheke, cheke, cheke.
>
> It has seen honey.)

Immediately after the song was heard, people rushed from the village to the river to fetch the pot of beer hidden in the bush. The beer was drunk, and the crowd followed the women into the village, where the main uzamba dance was to take place. The festival had already begun in the village. People were in a jovial mood, dancing, drinking, and eating.

The girl was quickly taken to the uzamba house, where she displayed the dancing skills she was taught by the bazamba to the amusement of the trainers and the local and the invited elderly women from the neighbouring community. This went on for the whole day and night. It usually came to an end the following morning. That marked the end of the ceremony.

After the ceremony, the girl was not allowed to speak to anyone. However, anyone wishing to speak to her gave her mboni, a present (normally, a string of beads), to start a conversation with her. *Ku meta* was a special event at which the mwali's hair on her head was removed. Thereafter, the mwali was taken to the river and bathed by the bazamba. From the river, she was told to sit on a mat outside a house, where she received public advice from the well-wishers, men and women, on how to behave as an adult in the community. This time, even unmarried women or other recently graduated mwalis were allowed to give advice openly.

The pieces of advice emphasised to her were:

(a) to be ready to be of use to the elders, especially the old

(b) to be hospitable to strangers

(c) to be kind to children and the cripples in the community.

The girl remained mute throughout the open-air advice-giving session.

During the first month after the uzamba ceremony, the girl ate from her parents' home only. This was because her mother was seen to be the appropriate person who would strictly observe certain taboos for her daughter successfully. For example, during that time, tradition did

not allow her mother to have sexual intercourse with her husband. If the parents had sexual intercourse during that time, the girl would suffer from mdulo. Sex was only allowed after the mwali's second menstrual period. The other reason for eating from her parents' home only was that the food given to her was mixed with some medicine for this occasion.

Two months after the first menstrual period, the girl had her hair cut again. This was now the mark of her *entry* into the world of *adulthood*. More advice and lessons on how to live as an adult in society were given to her. As an adult, she was particularly careful always to wear loincloth or underwear, *mugonda*. Soon after that, she was married to the man who proposed marriage to her before she became a mwali. If not, she joined her age-mates (mwalis) in the village. They played together and also slept together in the mpala ya basungwana, which was changed to the Ngoni term *nthanganeni.* This name is therefore Ngoni and not Tumbuka.

THE INSTITUTION OF NTHANGANENI

Nthanganeni or mpala ya basungwana was not just a building but a very important institution in the traditional life of the Tumbuka. From the era of the Ngoni, the institution was the cornerstone of the traditional marriage. By definition, *nthanganeni* was a name for a house where only girls slept. Those who were young and not initiated (matured) slept in one nthanganeni, a lower one, and those who were initiated (matured) also slept in another nthanganeni, the upper one. In a big village, therefore, there were many nthanganenis.

The nthanganeni was normally about four square metres in size, without room divisions inside. It had many reed mats and beddings but no furniture. The girls slept on the same mats, but each one had her own blanket of nyanda or animal hide. Most of the girls' discussions in the nthanganeni focused on boys, especially those who were good dancers at such dances as *vyanusi*, *fumu za pasi, vimbuza,* or

vilombo.[82] Such boys were always the centre of attraction and admired by the adult girls in the village and those from the neighbouring villages. Later on in the nineteenth century, those who participated in the labour migration by going to centres of employment in the region were also admired very much by the adult girls. The girls, especially the mwalis, were particularly careful not to involve themselves with old men whom they suspected to be already married. A girl would only agree to a marriage proposal from a young man on the advice from her friends and close female relatives.

Boys and girls met one another in many convenient places. They met at dancing centres at night or in the day, at weddings, and at other important festivals. It was rare to meet at beer parties because most women did not drink beer, and young women and men were forbidden from drinking beer. Boys took note of the girls they wanted at such ceremonies or functions. Then secretly the boys found out about the girls' conduct, behaviour, characteristics, and their families' status in society. The girls that met their benchmarks were the ones they quickly proposed marriage to. They also investigated the period the girl had stayed in the nthanganeni since becoming a mwali.

Mukuska was a term describing a girl who had overstayed in the nthanganeni. The reasons for this were many. Either she was ugly, lazy, rude, uncooperative with the young men, or her parents were suspected of practising witchcraft. Many young men were not interested in such girls. Any mwali not getting married within three years was considered to have overstayed and, hence, a mukuska. A divorced woman was called *chiwuya*, while a woman who has never been married before for whatever reasons was also called mukuska.

---

[82] After the First World (European) War, the Tumbuka that came back from the threatres of war introduced another very popular dance variously known as *malipenga* in Muyombe, *mapenenga* in Rumphi, and *muganda* in Lundazi and Mzimba. The dancers were smartly dressed, and to a great extent, their dance showed off the dexterity similar to the drills they learned during the war.

From the time of the Ngoni domination and the introduction of nthanganeni, how did the young men find women to marry? About three to five young men would go to the village of the girls they wanted to marry. Normally, their trip began in the late afternoon, and they reached the village in the early evening. In the village, they were directed to the nthanganeni by the children or by any person in the village. In fact, elders were always very happy to see young men coming to their village to visit their daughters.

Within a short time of the arrival of the young men, the girls of a particular nthanganeni got ready to welcome them. They invited the men in the nthanganeni for discussions and general chatting. Girls sat on one side of the mats spread on the floor and men on the other side. Most discussions were done in proverbs, *nthalika*; others, in the normal language.[83] Girls and men fell in love with each other during these visits and chatting sessions in the nthanganeni.

The men visited the nthanganeni several times before things between the partners were confirmed and other stages initiated, leading to a marriage. Girls never accepted marriage proposals at the first and second visits. If they did, the boys considered them of weak morals. Also, on the first visit, if things were going on well, the men would be allowed to 'sleep' in the nthanganeni. In practice, they did not sleep. They chatted all night up to the early morning. Occasionally, the men slept a little or dozed off for a short time. But as a traditional nthanganeni rule, the men woke up the girls before they left for their homes very early in the morning. However, if the girls were not interested in the men, they ran away from the nthanganeni and slept elsewhere in the village that night.

After accepting the marriage proposal, the girl provided the would-be husband the name and other details about her family and of her family intermediary, thenga (*nkalamba*). Such information was necessary and essential to the man's family before initiating marriage procedures. During the subsequent visits, the girl prepared food for

---

[83] Read more about nthalika in nthanganeni under the subheading *Marriage by Personal Choice* in chapter 6.

the man, which was normally a *chicken*, the traditional dignified relish with sima. It was prepared in accordance with the Tumbuka culture governing traditional marriages.

MPHALA

Mphala, a courtyard or forum of justice, was the centre of men's activities in the village. It was a place where you would see a number of men all the time, from morning to early evening, chatting and gossiping while undertaking various tasks. They did their metalsmith work there, and they discussed issues of importance there. The mphala was also a place where men of the village ate together. From time to time, the mphala was also transformed into a forum of justice, where the chief or headman and his advisors discussed all village cases and where collective judgements were passed. It was also a men's central eating place, where food from each man's house was brought and eaten by the men present at the mphala. Eating alone at one's house was considered being selfish or was an act of being a bad person.

If there was insufficient millet meal (*sima ya kambala* or *sima ya malezi*), the Tumbuka traditional staple in precolonial era, all food cooked was sent to the *men only* at the mphala. It was not always only one or two families that cooked all meals for the mphala. An arrangement was made to share the cooking responsibilities for the mphala. In most cases, each man's wife in the village was obliged to prepare food for the people (even if her husband was not present) at the mphala. A good cook was highly praised and brought honour to her husband. If a goat was slaughtered, the village shared the meat. The wives were always in a subtle competition for the position of the best cook for the mphala in the village. *However*, a chicken killed was not normally shared with others in the village; it was for that particular family because it was too small to be shared. But as a custom, the family that killed the chicken prepared it and sent it as *dignified* relish with sima to the mphala.

At the mphala, the village men ate the food first, a little from each plate. They then left the rest of the food for the younger men, who also left some for the children. Only male children from a specific age ate at the mphala. What they left for the children was called *makombo*. In many cases, the children scrambled for the makombo. The faster ones got more food than the slower ones. The slumberous children left the mphala still hungry because they were not fast enough to eat more food within a short time. Tradition did not permit parents (especially mothers) of children who ate from the mphala to give additional food at home even if they asked for it. That was one way of training them to be vigilant (wakeful) at all times at the mphala and in life. The society did not encourage boys to do things at a leisurely pace. It was quite common that if the relish was very good (such as fish, meat, or chicken), children were left with very little of it, sometimes only with the bones and gravy (sauce).[84]

CHILYELANO

The *chilyelano* was an equivalent of mphala, a place where women of the village ate together. Like at the mphala, women cooked food for the chilyelano. It did not matter whether or not her friends had already cooked for the mphala, each married woman took her food to the mphala and chilyelano *at all times.* At the chilyelano, the women sat and ate back to back. They got food from the plates in the centre and ate from their hands. Some old men interviewed also claimed to have eaten in this way. The reason for this was that it was constantly necessary to be on the lookout for wild animals. After eating, the plates (dishes) were cleared away by the children. Only female children from a specific age ate at the chilyelano. As at mphala, children got

[84] The term *relish* does not mean exactly the same thing as in the Western world. Here, it means vegetables, meat, chicken, fish, and other foods in this category that always go with sima, the traditional staple food of the Tumbuka. The Tumbuka prepare their relish with tomato, onion, and spices to produce excellent gravy.

the leftover food from the older women. When the relish was very good, such as fish and meat (normally, chicken was relish meant for the husband and the men at the mphala only), the young children were given very little of it, sometimes only the bones and gravy. The elderly women also discussed issues concerning women at this forum.

THE IMPOTENCE IN SOCIETY

In every society, there are men and women who are barren. They are unable to have biological children of their own. If it is a man who is impotent, it means that for some reasons, he is incapable of making a woman (who is capable of becoming pregnant) conceive after sleeping with her many times. If it is a woman who is barren, it means she is incapable of conceiving after sleeping with a man who has been *proved* capable of making a woman pregnant.

If a newly married couple stayed together for over a year without conceiving, people in the village started talking about it and wondered what the reasons were. The elders in the village investigated the problem and gave the couple appropriate medicine from an expert in this field. If it was a simple problem, the couple quickly got appropriate treatment, and thereafter, the wife would conceive. But if the problem was complicated and very difficult to treat, then the two never had children. Each one of the two would be called *chumba*. The term *chumba* is a word describing a barren man or woman. In some cases, the two chumbas could be allowed to end the marriage and try with other partners if that would make each 'new' pair produce their own children. This also confirmed the one who was the problem in the *initial* marriage.

If the problem was with the man, the elders in his family arranged it in such a way that either his brother, cousin, or any other close relative would be the one impregnating his wife *without* his knowledge. Normally, this was done after giving the husband medicine to psychologically make him feel convinced that he was the one actually impregnating his wife. This way, the couple had several children

without the husband knowing that the children were in fact from his own relatives. This was a top secret in the family. It was also cemented by a strict cultural law, which stipulates that a child born in the house is for the couple of that house no matter how hard another man claims that he was in reality the father of the child. In fact, in the traditional circles, if a woman of the house or the *biological* father (from outside the house) revealed to the public what was going on, the consequences were very serious indeed. Punishment was always *mysterious death* for the one who revealed the top secret of the family. What it meant was that no amount of provocation from the husband would make the wife reveal that the children they had were not his biological children, that someone else was the father. The same was true for the biological father. No amount of provocation from the husband would make the biological father reveal that he was in fact the real biological father of his (the impotent man's) children.

If the one who was barren was the woman, the man was asked to marry an additional woman to give the family children. The children born recognised the barren woman as their 'biological' mother as well, and some children lived with her. This is how the society went round the problems of impotence. In this situation, polygamy solved a societal problem. Probably this was one reason why and how polygamy started in the Tumbuka society.

TRADITIONAL EDUCATION

GENERAL EDUCATION

In the Tumbuka society, traditional education was very important. It was education for life. It always focused on the development of the society. It made children the real future leaders of the society. It made the children learn what the elders were doing in order to understand the way the society worked. With such knowledge, the subsequent generations were able to lead the society very well. There was a curriculum for each gender, and there was also a curriculum for both sexes.

Boys were taught at an early age how to clear the fields, construct houses and granaries, till the land, sow seeds, weed the fields, harvest the crops, and transport them to the granaries. They were also taught how to recognise medicinal trees in the forest, how to identify species of trees that were useful for their fibre in the manufacturing of nyanda, and how to identify trees for poles used in the building industry. They were taught how to identify and cut good poles, transport them, and build various types of houses and granaries. Boys learned how to kill birds and small animals, using snares and pit traps respectively. This was part of training in the hunting skills for boys. Through this training, the boys were able to learn how to prepare spears, bows, arrows, knives, axes, hoes, and other tools and weapons. They also learned how to treat skins and hides for use in society. The boys were also taught how to identify species of edible fish and the methods used in catching fish.

In the sixteenth century, when the cattle were introduced in the Tumbuka society, the elders taught boys how to care for the animals as they went herding far from the villages. At the mphala, the elderly men taught the boys how to make reed mats and reed baskets. Metalsmiths taught the boys how to forge various items for use in society. Traditional stories and histories were narrated to the young men at the mphala, and this way, the children knew their history. It was also through storytelling that the boys were taught appropriate values in society.

Girls were also taught how to till the land, weed the fields, harvest crops, and transport them to the granaries. They learned how to make beer, to pound grain in order to prepare meal (such as millet, rice, and sorghum meals), to identify edible wild vegetables, and to cook various foods. They also learned the art of pot-making and cooling drinking water in the clay pots. Fishing was another task they learned from the older women by accompanying them on the fishing trips. More important for the girls were lessons in childbearing, childcare, traditional family planning methods, and family caring for the husband and the other members of the families.

Respect for the elders in society was extremely important in the education of both girls and boys. Girls were taught to be obedient to their husbands, and boys were taught to love their wives and protect them from danger. Boys and girls were taught not to argue with parents and elders in the community, not to *respond* if they were being scolded (shouted at) by elders, not even to *look in the eyes of an elderly person* when she/he is talking to them, and not to *chew* anything while an elderly person is talking to them.'

Every elderly woman was their *mother* and could discipline them *anywhere* and when necessary. The same was true for an elderly man. He was their father and could discipline them anywhere and when necessary. This means that the community raised the children together and taught them good values together. The child was therefore a community possession *not* only for the parents. The young people never refused to do tasks assigned to them by any elder. They taught them to always say thank you each time they receive something from anybody and to always receive it with *both* hands and *not* with one hand.

When talking to someone (or being talked to) in a house, at the mphala, or in a place where it is possible to sit, especially if it is an elderly person in society or anyone older than them, they should always kneel or squat. They should not talk to elders or anyone older than them while walking away from him or her. They have to stop walking and talk to the person or be talked to by the person. They should always give way for the elders as they came ahead of them on the same small (bush) path (or road) going in the opposite direction. They should always be ready to be called upon to help in the community.

Those who respond quickly to elders' calls for help will themselves be assisted by the elders and will live better lives in society. The elders will always pray for them to live longer in society.

FROM BIRTH TO ADULTHOOD

In the Tumbuka society, there were three types of births—the ordinary birth, the illegitimate birth, and the ominous birth. In every community, there were bazamba, the midwives who assisted the pregnant women to successfully give birth. There were many taboos associated with pregnancy and the birth of a child. Ordinarily, prior to adulthood, children did not know how children came about. Parents always said that the mother went to the river and collected the baby from the hippo. This is why in the Tumbuka communities, there is still a song to explain the source of children.

The song goes like this: 'Chigwele zuwula mwana tione! Chigwele zuwula mwana tione!' Hippo, bring out a child from water for us to see! Hippo, bring out a child from water for us to see!

Each time children saw a hippo in a river and were themselves on a cliff, they always sang this song, expecting the hippo to show them or give them a baby in the same way it gave the babies to their mothers.

When a child was born, the sex of the child was announced to the members of the village by a shrill or a special *ululation* (*kakunga*). A baby boy was given *one* shrill, and a baby girl was given *two* shrills. The girl was given double shrills because according to the society, the girl was more important because she will give birth to other children and will stay in the village with her husband as per the tradition of the matrilineal society. But for the boy, on marriage he will leave the village for his wife's village. Normally, in matrilineal societies, girls are more important than boys.

The child was kept in the dark in the house for a week, and the mother remained in seclusion, seen only by the bazamba and the parents. The bazamba cut the umbilical cord using the sharp-edged grass *lunyezwa*. The cutting of the umbilical cord marked the end of the period of seclusion for the mother. Special care was taken on *who* was to bury the umbilical cord from the baby and where it was to be buried. In all cases, the family had to approve the woman who was to bury the umbilical cord and the site where it was to be buried. A

senior woman from the family had to be present at the burial site. The site was a family secret known only by very few senior members of the family. Once the cord fell off, the child was bathed with water mixed with medicine from the *katope* tree. After that, the baby was tied round the wrists and ankles with small bracelets of the grass *visunda.* From that time, there was strict separation between the husband and the wife. They stopped sleeping together for a specific period of time.

From that time, the wife observed certain taboos in the house. In the first one month, she was not allowed to cook any food. Culturally, she was considered unclean. However, on the second month, she was allowed to cook, but when cooking relish, she was not allowed to put salt in it. It was also in this same month that the husband gave presents to the bazamba who assisted his wife in giving birth. After accepting the presents, the bazamba left for their homes. The ceremony was called kubinga, *disengaging them from the mother of the newborn baby.* That was the time the husband 'returned' into his own house. The child was given a name. The husband gave the wife new clothes (barkcloth).

The grass visunda was removed and replaced with beads. At the first moon, the mother held her child towards the moon with the words 'There is your husband' or 'There is your wife', depending on the sex of the child. From birth up to the time of crawling, the child was called bonda or *nteta*. For the next two years, the couple was not allowed by the tradition of the society to have sex. Probably, that could have been one of the reasons for the practice of *polygamy* (*mitala*) among the Tumbuka. The men could not stand the mandatory two years without meeting the wife; hence, they looked for other women to marry to continue life as before in the two long family planning years.

When teething, it was bad omen if the upper teeth came out first before the lower ones. The lower teeth were expected to come out first before the upper ones. When the upper teeth came out of the gum first, that was a bad omen. The mother and the child were given special medicines to avoid future misfortunes to the family and the community.

Generally, a child was called *buza* or *chivuza* when it began crawling. That was also the stage when training in traditional education started. The child was carefully trained to imitate the socially accepted behaviour by the parents, siblings, other members of the family, and members of the community who came to the house. The chivuza stage ended with the coming out (that is, removing or pulling out) of the first milk tooth. That was always accompanied by a ceremony. When the child took out the first tooth after shaking it several times for several days, it was given to the parents, who kept it in the house. On the night of the next new moon, the child was called and told to stand before the parents' house. The tooth was placed in the child's hand. At that moment, the child was also told to turn her/his back to the house. While in that position, the child was told to throw the tooth over the shoulder to the roof of the house, uttering, 'May the rats in the roof, whose teeth are white and sharp, give me teeth like theirs.' The ceremony was only for the first tooth. The subsequent teeth were just thrown away on the family ash (*vyoto*) or garbage heap without the ceremony.

After the tooth ceremony, the child began a new stage, the stage of *mwana* (human personality). It was during that stage that the child was given more training and observed a number of dos and don'ts. For example, the child was told the following:

(a) Do not use your parents' sleeping mat.

(b) Do not enter your parents' bedroom

(c) Do not put your hand into the cooking pot to take food, especially relish. (However, a *girl* was *allowed* to do this.)

(d) You should have no familiarity or closeness with your father. (However, the *boy* was *allowed* to do this.)

(e) Do not stand in the doorway, straddle across the threshold, or lean upon the door posts.

The list is endless. At this stage, the child learned the general habits of courtesy and politeness and hundreds of other good habits.

Usually for boys, the adulthood stage took place between the ages fifteen and eighteen years. For the girls, the period was much lower, between the ages eleven to fourteen years. While the girls had an elaborate public initiation ceremony (uzamba) ushering them into adulthood, the boys did not.

Few people knew about the boy's initiation ceremony. Those who knew included the elderly men in the family and at the mphala. For a boy, the signs of entering adulthood included the following:

(a) breaking of the voice (beginning of a deep voice)

(b) appearance of pimples or blackheads (locally called *nthenko*) on the face

(c) growth of hair on the face (beard and moustache)

(d) occasional wet or sweet dreams.

When the boy began experiencing occasional wet dreams, he reported to the senior unmarried boys within the village. These reported to the elderly men in the village, who also informed the father of the boy. Once that was known, the father arranged for puberty medicines to be obtained from appropriate sources and administered to the boy by specialists in the village. Before he got the medicine, the boy was not allowed to eat relish prepared with salt or speak with any elder in the community. The boy's family gave presents to the men administering the medicine to the boy. Usually, it was a hoe or a barkcloth. The boy's family gave the boy items that marked his entry into the adulthood stage. These included a bow and arrow and a spear. There was also a small ceremony whereby the boy was asked to throw the spear or arrow *over* the house. If it fell flat on the ground, that was a bad omen as a future husband. But if it stuck in the ground, especially if it did so at about a forty-five-degree angle, that was a very good omen as a future husband.

After the ceremony was completed, the boy was introduced to his new peers, the marriageable boys in the village. One of the older boys was attached to him (he was under his internship) to give him training on what it meant to enter the stage of adulthood. At the first meal with his colleagues, he waited until they all ate the food. He collected the leftovers and threw them away. That was a sign of a person who will be a good father of children. Thereafter, he ate normally together with his peers in the village.

The illegitimate birth was the most shameful thing for the family, clan, and the village. Such a birth was called *chiwulila*, an illegitimate occurrence. Normally, the man responsible for such birth was chased away from the village. In such situations, the bazamba even refused to attend to the girl when she went into labour. Only her mother attended to her. That was part of the punishment for the family. The mother and the baby were secluded from the village. They were only readmitted to the village after medicine was administered to the mother. Thereafter, appropriate rituals followed, as explained in the foregoing paragraphs.

Ominous birth was not a shameful birth like the illegitimate birth explained above. It was a dangerous birth forbidden by the society. It was a birth the society could not control as its circumstances were beyond the powers of the society. It was a matter outside human control. The best example of an ominous birth was the birth of twins, *banthembwa* or *bana banthembwa*. The elder twin is called *muleza*, and the younger one is *nyuma* (behind). The twins were not killed, but specific rituals were performed to protect the society from severe misfortunes due to their arrival in the village.

Soon after the birth of twins, the mother and her babies were quarantined in an isolation house called *chisakasa*, which was quickly built outside the village by the husband. The husband also built one chisakasa for himself. Thus, the mother and the twins stayed in one chisakasa, and the husband stayed in the other. That was where and how the couple of the twins stayed for some time. When leaving their house in the village, they did not leave using the *usual* door. They left the house using a door that was created by breaking the house directly

opposite the usual door. They collected the items from the main house to the chisakasa and began staying there.

After a short period of time in the chisakasa, the couple returned to the village. That was only after specific rituals were performed. First, *before* the return to the village, a pot from the couple's house was broken at the point where two paths meet (*folked path*), locally known as *nthowa ndekano*. The mother of the twins, with the help of the midwives, broke the pot. After the pot-breaking ceremony, the couple returned to the village. Second, *on their return* into the village, the mother of the twins cooked sima with *relish* mixed with medicines, and the food was shared by all in the village. That was to stop any pending disaster due to the birth of the twins. The couple was given *additional medicine* to completely *purify* and *protect* them from possible future dangers that could come in the family (and community) because of having twins.

A dead twin was buried away from the usual burial ground. It was buried near the water. The belief was that twins influenced natural factors like weather, and if buried near the water, the territory would receive adequate rainfall, but if buried in a dry place, the kingdom would receive dry weather, leading to drought and crop failure and, consequently, famine.

It was not only the *birth* of twins that was ominous but also the *position* of the child in the mother's womb. Thus, the positioning of the baby as it came out of the mother's womb was also ominous; hence, there were *names* describing such births and *names for people* who were born in such positions. The following names give good examples of people born in the respective positions: Mavunika, forward position; Fuli, a posture of scraping the ground with the hands; Mafundi, a contorted or knotted position; Malomba, a supplicating posture of the hands; and Kagadama (Gadama) or Mpawa, a position where the head and face are turned upwards. As a custom, for each birth of this kind, medicines were administered to the affected families in the village.

MABAZGO: THE TUMBUKA TRADITIONAL CEREMONY

Field interviews on the Tumbuka oral traditions revealed that the Tumbuka had one national traditional ceremony. It was called Mabazgo (counting or national census). This was an annual event, and as such, it was like a yearly national census. The events were always held in the king's village. All preparations were done there. People from all corners of the kingdom came and gathered in the village a day before the celebrations.

On the day of the celebrations, after all the final arrangements were done, drumming of the *funeral drum* was started. This signified the appearance of the king from the palace. He came out for everybody to see him. His coming out of the *house* was immediately followed by words of praise in a mixture of Chi-Tumbuka and Chi-Luba languages. The prime minister eulogised the king. The praises focused on Mbulalubilo and the crossing of the Lualaba, Mweru-wa-Ntipa, and Songwe rivers. After this, the prime minister repeated the praises but, this time, using only Chi-Tumbuka language and focusing on M'nyanjagha.

The subkings (nyanjaghas) under the M'nyanjagha who came to the Mabazgo celebration were at this time allowed to come in the centre of the arena at the palace grounds. The subchiefs included Kapemba, Katongomala, Chiyunga, Jalila, Chama, Chiti, Mgwela, Zolokele, Khutamaji, Longwe, Kholopete, Mphamba, Chagumuka, Chigoma Zimba, Baza Dokowe, Gumba, Luhanga, Kumwenda, Malandula, and Kahunoko. The list is endless.

From where he sat, the king was the first to address the people. Basically, he thanked the people for coming to the celebrations and also emphasised the importance of the traditions and culture in the kingdom. After the king addressed the people, it was time for the subchiefs (subkings) to address the people. One at a time, each subking narrated the history of how the Tumbuka came from Luba Kingdom and settled in the kingdom or chiefdom. Each subking reported to the king and the people on the births, deaths, droughts, floods, rainfall, harvest, successes, and major problems in his chiefdom.

After the reporting session was over, many people from the different chiefdoms performed dances of different types. The common dances were mkocho and mbeleka (wedding dances), *ulumba* (hunting dance), *chikweta*, *chitivili*, *magomba*, *kamuchoma* (*muchoma*), uzamba, and later in the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, vilombo and vimbuza respectively.[85] The new dances, vilombo and vimbuza, are discussed in the next chapter. In 1920, malipenga was another dance for the Tumbuka introduced by those who served in the First European War. During Mabazgo, people drank beer, ate different types of food, and enjoyed themselves for a few days in the king's village.

Just before the celebrations were over, people gathered again in the main arena. A closing speech marking the end of the Mabazgo ceremony was delivered by Nyanjagha Jalila. Thereafter, people prepared to leave the following day. The Mabazgo was a systematic way of counting people in the kingdom and knowing the positive developments taking place in it. It was also a way for the king to know the problems his people were facing.

---

[85] Chikweta was a dance for both men and women. Chitivili was a dance for men only. Magomba was a dance for both men and women. Kamuchoma or muchoma was a dance for both men and women. Muganda/Malipenga was a war dance by men only, using sticks and traditional trumpets. Uzamba was a dance for the girls' puberty rite, which was exclusive for women.

CHAPTER EIGHT

DISEASES AND DANCES OF THE SPIRITUALLY POSSESSED

Before the Tumbuka had any strong contacts with their neighbours, their main dance was magomba, followed by mkocho, mbeleka, ulumba, chikweta, and chitivili. Magomba was performed as purely an ordinary dance and not a disease-triggered dance or a dance initiated by spirits that possessed the dancer. Therefore, all the disease-triggered dances discussed in the following paragraphs were originally not in any way connected or related to the Tumbuka society. The non-Tumbuka people who came to trade with them were the ones who brought the disease-triggered dances into the Tumbuka society. After some time, the foreign traders settled permanently among the Tumbuka, whose women they married. After several generations, they became completely immersed in the Tumbuka culture. However, by origin they still considered themselves as non-Tumbuka.

Initially, the spirits, the main sources of the dances, attacked or possessed only the aliens (foreigners), traders or not, who settled among the Tumbuka. These were mainly the Chewa, the Bisa, the Senga, the Bemba, and the Ngoni.[86] However, later on, the same spirits of the forefathers of these foreigners who were incorporated among the Tumbuka began attacking the indigenous people, the Tumbuka,

[86] It is interesting that the Balowoka traders are not mentioned in the oral traditions.

as well. Perhaps this was so because the foreigners were by this time Tumbuka by culture. Many generations had passed since their ancestors settled in Utumbuka (M'nyanjagha Kingdom). This is how the Tumbuka became victims of the foreign spirits, which initiated the disease-triggered dances we now call vilombo, vimbuza, fumu za pasi, and vyanusi.

For each disease, the victim of the foreign spirits complained of headache, heartache, and at times, feeling weak or behaving like a mad person. However, the way each victim reacted to the various pains or attacks was extremely important because it was the only way of clearly defining and identifying the particular spiritual disease. Also, the differences in the reactions or behaviours of the victim when attacked by the disease enabled the traditional diviner or healer to clearly identify the type of disease that had attacked the victim. With this knowledge, he was able to look for the appropriate medicine to treat the afflicted person.

Since all these diseases were spiritual, they responded very well to the rhythms of their respective drums. When drums were beaten appropriately, they made the spirits possessing the patient to become very quiet, and that made the sick get well or healed. Always, the medicine only temporarily *treats* the afflicted person but never *cures* the disease. After some time, the same spirits may come back and attack the same person. These diseases were only treated by diviners or healers, who at one time in the past were themselves patients possessed by the same spirits of the particular diseases and were treated. Modern medicines fail to treat people suffering from these spiritual diseases.

The sounds of particular drums were a mandatory final course of treatment for these spiritual diseases. Usually, three drums were methodically beaten to bring out a rhythm specifically responding to the type of the disease. Thus, a specific dance was performed by a specific patient, responding to a specific drum rhythm that was very different from those of the other patients. The three drums were: *ng'oma yikulu* (the big main bass, and rhythm drum), *mpoza* (medium-sized lead drum), and *mbiningu* (small tenor drum).

Drum specialists, who were trained by the community and, with the passage of time, had acquired a lot of experience, were the ones who beat the drums to produce the appropriate sounds befitting the illness of a particular patient. Any one of these diseases could attack any adult person at any time, although the most common times were at new moon and at full moon. They could also attack anyone—women, men, young adults, adults, and the old.

FUMU ZA PASI

Literally, *fumu za pasi* means 'the earthly kings'. According to the oral traditions, this disease is caused by the spirits of the dead Bisa or the dead Bemba who were buried in the Tumbuka society many years ago, probably from the seventeenth century. The disease strikes during the full moon, and the afflicted feels headache and heartache. The spirits of fumu za pasi seem to have been very incensed spirits. This is because, in most cases, the possessed person behaves like wild creatures. For example, the victim may roar like a lion. The sick may also feel very energised and be able to cultivate a large field alone within a short time. And according to tradition, a long time ago, the person attacked by the fumu za pasi spirits turned into a hyena at night and roamed the forests. By daybreak she/he turned back to human form and returned to the village.

As part of treatment, each time one was possessed by these spirits, she/he ate raw eggs and *muvuba*, a form of very light porridge collected from the pot of boiling sima that is about to be cooked. The muvuba was mixed with medicine before drinking it. She/he would also drink fresh blood of a goat killed for this purpose. The more important form of treatment was the fumu za pasi drums qualitatively beaten for the sick, who danced appropriately to their rhythms. After dancing, the afflicted became well. The interesting thing is that immediately after, the patient began feeling healthy; she/he went into a trance and started speaking in tongues, using Bisa and Bemba languages, the languages of the spirits that possessed her/him. Almost in all cases, during the normal times when the patient was healthy she/he never spoke the

languages she/he spoke during the time of sickness. In fact, the patient was just told by the onlookers that, she/he was speaking in the foreign languages during the time she/he was in a trance. Probably because while in the trance, the patient spoke in Bisa and Bemba languages that the disease was associated with the fumu za pasi spirits, the spirits of the dead Bisa and Bemba people buried a long time ago in the Tumbuka society. [87]

VILOMBO

Vilombo is also a spiritual disease that attacks many Tumbuka people. The afflicted person feels weak and has heartache. He/she gets hallucinations and cries 'Hu hu hu' like wild creatures. He/she also dreams of *wild creatures* (*vilombo* in the Chi-Chewa language), especially snakes and particularly the python. The patient is given traditional medicines, and appropriate drums are played for him/her. Together with the power of the medicine, the sick person becomes well. Originally, vilombo is a Chewa spiritual disease. The Chewa who came a long time ago and lived among the Tumbuka are the ones who brought the vilombo disease. When they died, their spirits began attacking both, the Chewa who were living in the Tumbuka society and the local people, the Tumbuka. This is how the Tumbuka got this spiritual disease, which was originally from the Chewa, their southern neighbours.

VYANUSI

Vyanusi is a spiritual disease brought among the Tumbuka by the Ngoni. Therefore, this disease only appeared after the arrival and settlement of the Ngoni in the Tumbuka country. The afflicted

---

87 In Chi-Bisa and Chi-Bemba languages, they are called *imfumu sha pansi* spirits.

person—that is, the one possessed by the vyanusi spirits—feels headache and heartache. He/she also feels like a mad person and rushes into the bush. In the bush, the patient catches snakes, especially the python, unharmed. While in the bush and in a semi-insane state, the sick person is also endowed with powers to fetch the appropriate medicine for his/her illness.

The vyanusi spirits attack the victims normally during the full moon. In addition to the medicine that she/he fetches alone from the bush, the patient is also subjected to the sounds of the vyanusi drums. She/he dances while holding a shield in one hand and a knobkierie in the other hand. She/he then beats the shield with the knobkierie as she/he dances. The other name for vyanusi is *ming'omba.*

VIMBUZA

Many Tumbuka people suffer from vimbuza, a spiritual disease brought into their land a long time ago by the Bisa (later known as the Senga) and the Bemba. The person attacked by vimbuza spirits (or *chimbuza* spirit) complains of headache and heartache. Soon thereafter, she/he goes into a trance, and treatment is quickly sought for him/her. Many victims say that vimbuza is a disease very similar to a disease called *chintu chawaka* (an innocent thing) that attacks children. It begins like malaria, but soon afterwards, the eyes revolve in their sockets. In adults, the chintu chawaka disease is called *vizirisi* (slightly similar to *epilepsy*).

Figure 21: A Vimbuza dancer

Oral evidence has revealed that, as a disease, vimbuza appeared in the Tumbuka society after the First European War in 1918 but became more noticeable by 1922. The disease is very similar to the fumu za pasi disease discussed above. The major difference is that in the case of vimbuza, the majority of the victims do not speak in tongues. Those who do, they do so using Bisa and Bemba languages. Like the fumu za pasi and as part of treatment, the vimbuza patient eats muvuba mixed with medicines, eats raw eggs, drinks fresh blood from a goat killed for this purpose (although sometimes fresh blood from a chicken is also taken by the sick person). During this time, the afflicted does not eat sima.

The vimbuza patient normally knows the medicine for the disease through dreams. Once he/she has dreamed about the medicine, she/he goes into the bush to look for it. Additional medicines include goat's bile. The bile bag (gall bladder) is inflated and the patient wears it round the waist together with the goat's skin. Like the other diseases discussed above, the vimbuza patient is finally treated by dancing to the sounds of the vimbuza drums. For the dance, she/he wears the *machowa*—that is, bells worn on the legs and strips of goat's skin worn on the body. The patient dances by demonstrating the way a hare runs or dashes in the bush. After dancing, the patient becomes well. The vimbuza spirits normally attack their victims during the full moon.

Oral evidence from the victims shows that vimbuza can be transmitted from one person to the other through food and water. Since the vimbuza patient eats food cooked in his own separate utensils, it is assumed that if such utensils are accidentally mixed with the utensils of non-vimbuza patients, the disease is thus transmitted to people who will use the affected utensils. The cooking utensils of the vimbuza patients are supposed to be cleaned separately. Sometimes the utensils are accidentally cleaned with communal water at or from the wells or the ponds. This way the disease is transmitted from one family to the other.

An important observation about the vimbuza spiritual disease is that once treated, the victim must follow strict rules to reduce the frequencies of occurrences. Among such restrictions or taboos are the following:

1. Never eat meat from an animal killed by wild beasts or meat from an animal that died on its own.

2. Never eat ground beans (*zgama*).

3. Never eat fish called mudsucker (*mulamba*).

4. During her menstruation period, a woman should not cross behind the vimbuza patient whether or not at the time of crossing the victim is healthy or not. If she does, her period of menstruation will be extended for two weeks.

5. Never eat meat from the hare (*kalulu*).

6. Never eat *swembe*, a small bird with a very long tail. The swembe birds are always found together in large groups.

7. Never touch a newborn baby.

8. Never view a body of a dead person. If done, it can lead to instant death.

9. Take appropriate medicine before eating any new crop. If eaten before medicine is taken, the possessed will fall sick for a week.

10. Once a year, the chimbuza or victim takes appropriate medicines mixed with mushrooms to allow him/her to eat mushrooms for the season.

11. A few days after recovery from an attack of vimbuza spirits, avoid sexual intercourse with any woman, including your wife.

Once the above rules are strictly followed and other prescribed medicines are also taken regularly according to the traditional doctor's instructions, the attacks are greatly minimised, and even these occur after very long intervals. However, note that these days many vimbuza dancers in the urban areas dance for commercial purposes, not as a way of treatment.

CHAPTER NINE

FUNERAL, BURIAL, AND CLEANSING PRACTICES

> To attempt to . . . describe the ritual of burial is extremely difficult owing to the variety in detail due to the large number of clans now living and intermarrying in our area but not originally belonging to it [the Tumbuka Kingdom].[88]

When death has occurred in a family and some members of the family are not present in the village, those present perform a ritual to protect those far away from misfortune or the ominous happening to them (*chidima ku maso* or *chisi ku maso* or *msiku*). Two axe heads are struck together in the general direction taken by each of the absent individuals when leaving the village. At night, grass flares are lit, and this is followed by spit-praying, which ends with the following words: 'May there be no darkness before your eyes [*chidima ku maso yayi*].'[89]

---

[88] Young, *Notes on the Customs and Folk-lore of the Tumbuka–Kamanga Peoples,* p. 166.

[89] Note that *chidima ku maso*, 'darkness on the face' or 'darkening of the life of the member of the family who is absent or very far away and has not heard of the death in the family', means anything negative or unexplained negative behaviour by the member of the family who has not heard about the death in the family. For instance, an outburst of

According to the Tumbuka custom, elderly women of the village were the only ones who nursed very sick adult men and women. They were also the only ones who told the people who came to the house to see the patient and the condition of the sick person. If the patient became very sick, the recently married couple was not allowed to enter the house where the patient was. They were also not allowed to come to the hearth of the same house. If they did not oblige to this rule, they would kill the patient by transmitting a disease called *vumbila*. The disease is a more severe type of mdulo. It causes severe cough and serious chest pains.

Death was announced to important relatives and guardians in the family. The announcement, *nduvyo*, was done by carrying a chicken to give to the person you are informing about the death that has occurred in the family. The way in which the announcement was made determined to a large extent the type of relationship that existed between the members of the whole clan and the family of the deceased person being informed about the death. If nduvyo was just by word of mouth, it meant that the relationship was not as good as it should be. However, if a chicken was used in the nduvyo, it meant that the relationship was very good.

In the undistorted Tumbuka tradition, when a person died, only women wailed and not men. The male chief mourner could sob a bit if he failed to contain the grief. That was all he could do. When relatives came from near or distant places, as they approached the village, women began wailing. When the women in the funeral house heard them, they quickly responded or 'received' them by wailing as well. That became *chitengelo*, the general wailing at the funeral house. As a rule, men gathered outside, while women assembled inside the funeral house. After the wailing subsided, the male guardians who came from far conferred with their counterparts to discuss the manner in which the deceased died and the person who bewitched him/her, *uyo wamulowa*.

---

temper or hate, losing employment without cause, being accusing of something you have not done, and so on.

Only the death of very old people was considered a 'natural' death; the rest were almost always considered to have been due to witchcraft. Normally, burial took place the same day or the following day. Sometimes, they waited for more relatives up to three days before burial took place. During the mourning period, mourners slept at the funeral house, *chivumbi.* Women slept inside the funeral house, while the men slept outside in a roofless shelter. All mourners slept either on leaves or on grass.

As a rule, burial had to be witnessed by key guardians from the wife's and the husband's families. On failing to observe this rule, serious troubles erupted. The family that did it alone was heavily fined and even accused of being responsible for the death of the deceased person. This was worse at the death of a woman. The payments, *kuphepiska*, given to the grieving family were for consoling them.

The burial procedures before the *actual* burial followed a proper order, *dongosolo.* First, members of the family prepared the body (*kunozga chitanda*) for burial. How was this done? They organised reed mat, barkcloth, and oil. The barkcloth was laid on the mat. The body was washed, and after that, it was anointed with the oil and then clothed in the deceased's own clothes. The preparation stage was done either in the deceased's house or at the grave. Once the body was clothed, it was put on the barkcloth laid on the mat. The body was wrapped and tied on the mat. This was again tied to the poles for support. This also made it easy to carry the body from the village to the graveyard. The people who by tradition were allowed to prepare the body for burial included the following: grandchildren or *bazukulu* (males or females, depending on the gender of the dead person), close relatives or *bene na bene*, and the *ordinary* people of the village. After the burial, the *ordinary* people were later highly honoured by the relatives of the deceased person.

The grandchildren carried the coffin from the house to the graveyard. The *actual* grave (*trench* or *ditch*) where the body is laid down has three names. It is called *nyumba*, a 'house'. It is also called *dindi* or *muwunda*, a 'mound'. The graveyard or cemetery is called *malalo* or *mawono*, 'the sleeping place' or 'a place where you lie down'. At

the graveyard, there were four groups of people. There were the *bachimbwi*, the hyaenas, whose responsibility was to dig the grave and shovel the soil. The other group was that of the key relatives, who remained seated, watching the process of digging by the bachimbwi. The third group was that of the bazukulu, whose task was to bring the body to the graveyard and lower it into the grave (house) properly. The fourth group was that of the *ordinary* people from the village and the neighbouring communities.

When the grave was ready, the bazukulu lowered the coffin into it.[90] When preparing the body at the house, it was laid on its right-hand side. In the grave, it faced the north, its head to the east, and the legs to the west. The Tumbuka came from Luba Kingdom and reached their present area using the northern route, hence the custom of facing the north. They came in their present land from the east (in Kalonga), hence the reason for the head facing east. And in that position, the legs (feet) will automatically face the west. A number of personal items of the deceased were laid beside the coffin in the grave. They included clothes, plates, and baskets. They were meant for use in the other world, where he/she was going.

Before filling the grave with soil, each one of the people present cast cold ashes (vyoto or *makala!*) into the grave. The significance of this was that it protected the people from having nightmares afterwards. After that was done, the bachimbwi filled the grave with soil until the mound, dindi, was created. If the buried person was a good farmer, seeds were poured on the mound. If he was a good hunter, a sign to that effect was erected or left on the mound. They believed that he/she would continue with the same activity in the other world.

After burial, they all went to the stream to wash. Each gender washed separately at a distance from each other. First, the grandchildren washed, then they poured water on each of the other mourners, one at a time. Serious washing was for those who touched the body or

---

[90] The coffin as we know it today never existed among the Tumbuka. Bodies were carefully wrapped or put in a specially prepared reed mat. This is what was lowered in the grave and buried.

dug the grave. Others just washed their hands. The majority of the mourners washed to avoid death repeatedly coming to the village. Additionally, those who touched the body washed to remove dirt, *likho*/*malikho*, from their bodies.

Before entering the village, the mourners from the stream underwent a special ritual to enable them to start a new life in the village. A traditional doctor, ng'anga, was called to perform the ritual. He/she prepared a small fire on the path to the village. He/she threw his/her medicine in the fire and made each mourner leap over the medicine flame, beginning with the grandchildren and ending with the ordinary mourners. Also, the ng'anga prepared a cold gruel, *m'timpwa* (similar to *vimphotwa*!), which was a concoction of medicine, fermented millet (*chilungo*), and water. The mixture was carefully prepared in a sifting basket, luselo. Each mourner was made to drink a bit of the m'timpwa. The ritual was called *ndumo.* It marked the beginning of a 'new' life in the village.

In the village, all members of the bereaved family slept at chivumbi. The bazukulu and bachimbwi slept in a separate place from the rest of the mourners. From that time, they were 'taboo', *ba m'zilo*. They ate food and drank beer on their own. Anyone who stepped on the feet of one or all these 'special' people or passed behind their place was fined a chicken. Food for the chivumbi came from many families in the village. That was one way of comforting the bereaved family so that they could quickly forget the death of their beloved one. Chivumbi was only abandoned after most relatives from distant places had visited the funeral house and conferred with the bereaved members of the family. It could take days or weeks. The members of the bereaved family were easily identified in the village because of what they wore for the occasion. Men and women wore barkcloth strips as broad headbands or as string necklaces.

A day before the mourners dispersed from chivumbi, there were many activities at the funeral house. These included dancing, eating various foods, and drinking plenty of beer. Professional dancers, *vilimbi vya gule*, performed to their best and were given presents such as chickens, goats, food, cloth and beer. In the morning, the members of the family

and some friends of the deceased person went to the graveyard with flour (millet meal) and beer. They dug a small hole at the head of the deceased's grave and poured flour and beer and performed spit-praying before returning to the village.

If the deceased was a small person, the hair-cutting session took place the same morning before members of the family dispersed to their respective homes. However, if the deceased was an adult, the hair-cutting ritual did not take place on that day. They waited for one year before cutting the hair on the heads of close members of the family. As long as the hair was not cut, no one affected was allowed either to have marital relations or to marry during that 'closed' period. If it was proved that some members of the family broke this regulation, the penalty was a heavy fine.

On the day of cutting the hair, all affected members of the family came back to the funeral house and took part in the hair-cutting ritual. That was also a time of dancing, eating, and drinking. The dance was called *gule wa sembe* or *gule wa masisi*. At this festival, friends of the dead person brought various crops—such as beans, millet, and groundnuts—and poured them on the ground in the dancing arena for people to tread on. That was a way of mourning their departed colleague. When everything ended, members of the family, together with some of the friends of the deceased colleague, went to the graveyard with beer and flour. They prayed at his grave, inviting his spirit to come home and see his *mbumba* (family). On their trip back to the village, they poured *flour* on the path.[91] The *beer* was put in the deceased person's principal house. If the mice scattered the *flour* on the path and the *beer* rose and spilled, they concluded that the dead person's spirit had *eaten* the flour or had *drunk* the beer.

As explained earlier, if it was a husband who died, the widow (chokolo) chose a member from the late husband's family to marry her. She was not allowed to mention a name of an outsider, *muntu wa waka,*

---

[91] Here the term *flour* means the 'millet meal' (powder) from finger millet that was the staple food in the kingdom during the precolonial era. Today, the main staple in Zambia is mealie meal (powder) from maize.

to marry her. That marriage was in actual fact an inheritance of the widow (*kupyana chokolo*) and is still in practice among the Tumbuka, but this time on a smaller scale. If the widow accepted to be married or inherited (or a widower agreed to marry another woman from his late wife's family) by a member of the family, the *cleansing process* was initiated. The two were asked to have sexual intercourse as a way of cleansing the widow/widower. However, today, this practice is not done because of the prevalence of many sexually transmitted diseases, including the dreaded HIV/AIDS. What they do is only sprinkle mealie meal on the widow/widower and cut his/her hair.

CHAPTER TEN

RELIGION: KAVUBA AND SPIRIT SPIT-PRAYING

Religion is an organised system of beliefs, ceremonies, practices, and worship that centre on one supreme god. The Tumbuka were and still are monotheistic—that is to say, they acknowledge only one true god. They do this by following a religion of *kavuba*, which means 'shrine' (*tuvuba* means 'shrines'), and spirit spit-praying (*ku khwelula*) because it was and still is part of the heritage of their culture. For the Tumbuka (and in other societies too), it is believed that religion gives a feeling of security because they believe that a divine power watches over them. They ask the divine power for help and protection. The same religion promises salvation and happiness in a life after death. Religion also gives a sense of individual fulfilment and meaning to life.

The Tumbuka believed in one god, Chiuta. But they could only reach their god through the intermediaries, the spirits (*mizimu*) of their dead relatives (*vibanda*). God could therefore not be reached directly. Their prayers had to go to god through the spirits of their dead relatives. These spirits lived in *heaven* and were in constant *contact* with them and their god.

KAVUBA AND SPIT-PRAYING

A kavuba was equivalent to a church today where Christians worship or any other place where those who believe in a supreme god congregate to worship. A kavuba was, therefore, a small hut at which the Tumbuka prayed to their god through the spirits of their dead relatives. Its poles were built from the *musolo* trees only and under the musolo tree. This is a very sacred tree among the Tumbuka. The kavuba was built under the musolo tree because they believed that the spirits of their dead relatives were living under the roots of this tree. It was also believed that in the absence of the kavuba, the spirit lived in the forests. Therefore, the kavuba was meant to be a home for the homeless spirits.

The spirits came from heaven and temporarily lived in the tuvuba built for them by the members of their *living* families. Sometimes they came from heaven and visited (or lived in) tuvuba in times of worship. If tuvuba were not built, the spirits became angry and troubled the people in the family, clan, or the society. They were angry because they had no place to 'live' in. A family could have several tuvuba for the spirits of the various dead relatives. But there was always one kavuba for each chief that died and each kavuba was the responsibility of each family that built it. Sometimes, each family or clan built its own *family* or *clan* kavuba. There were no people guarding tuvuba. These were and still are sacred places, and nobody went there to vandalise them.

Each time a family or a community faced problems, people went to their respective tuvuba. Generally, people prayed at tuvuba in times of natural calamities, such as famine, drought, floods, locusts, diseases, and when dangerous wild animals terrorised them.

Occasionally, the people consulted the traditional doctor/healer (ng'anga) to find out the causes of the problems facing them. Normally, the traditional doctor/healer told them that the spirits of their various dead relatives were angry for one reason or the other. On hearing this, the people prepared themselves and went to their respective tuvuba. Note that a traditional doctor/healer was not significant in this religion. The people consulted him/her only when it

was very necessary to do so or just as a formality. Many times people prayed at their tuvuba without prior consultations with the traditional doctors/healers.

The head of the family or clan was the leader of the kavuba of that family or clan. The head of the family or clan was also the leader of the spit-prayers. He prayed on their behalf and in their presence at the kavuba.

The people brought offerings (sacrifices) to the kavuba for the spirits of their dead relatives dwelling in them to eat or drink. They included cooked liver of any edible animal, traditional beer carried in traditional clay pot, cooked meat, new crops, and other foods. The Tumbuka believed that whatever offerings were tampered with or were missing from the kavuba the following morning were actually eaten or drunk by the spirits. This was also a sign that they had appropriately appeased their spirits and would in turn have their requests positively answered.

Indeed, during the oral interview, we were told that, if their ancestors prayed that way, they got what they wanted. For example, if they prayed for rain, it could rain before they even reached the village from the kavuba. If they prayed for the wild beast to stop terrorising them at night, the same day there would be peace at night. If they prayed for meat, they would find one big animal dead on its own in the bush near their village the same day or a few days afterwards or hunters would have unusual luck and kill many animals. Their god was responded to their requests through their intermediaries, the spirits of their dead relatives.

At the kavuba, the people who prayed on behalf of those present practised what has come to be known as spirit spit-praying (ku khwelula). They spat small amounts of saliva as they prayed (or recited some words) to their ancestors' spirits. For example, they would say, 'Our ancestor . . . we request you to come into this kavuba that we have built for you . . . eradicate diseases from our villages . . . protect us from the wild animals troubling us . . . Bless us all.'

The Tumbuka were not idol-worshippers as some scholars thought.[92] They did not pray to the various winds or rain winds, such as *chikang'ombe* (north/north-east winds/rains), *m'nyimbili* (north-west winds/rains), *thunga* (east winds/rains), and *m'zambwe* (west winds/rains). They also did not worship idols such as pools of water, trees, rocks, or hills and mountains. They believed in a god who could only be reached through their ancestors' spirits.

What we have discussed in this chapter is not always practised because of the introduction of Christianity (*Ekeleziya*) and Western culture in the Tumbuka society, and we believe the same is true in other societies in Africa. Nowadays, worship (*chisopo*) is done according to the Christian culture.

92 Read Pachai (ed.), *The Early History of Malawi*, *passim*.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

SLAVERY AND SLAVE TRADE

SLAVERY

Slavery is by definition a practice in which people *own* other people for their own use. A household or *domestic* slave is therefore the property of his or her owner and works for him or her without pay. The owner, who is normally called a master or a mistress, provides the slave with food, shelter, and clothing. Slavery is not a new thing in the world. It began in the prehistoric times and has been practised ever since and was only prohibited at the end of the nineteenth century.

Like many societies in the world, the Tumbuka practised the system of owning family slaves long before the coming of the slave *trade*. Domestic slaves were obtained in a number of ways. Sometimes during severe famine, some individuals or families offered themselves as household slaves to those that had a lot of food. If two families disputed, the offending family would sometimes give or pay a slave as a fine to the other family. Captives in local wars or fights became slaves for the victors.

Domestic *slavery* was humane. Slaves were considered as members of the family. The master had obligations in respect of the slave's family. Domestic slaves were never free people—although in the traditional Tumbuka society, they lived like free people. In some areas, domestic

slaves were eventually incorporated into the families of the master or the mistress as their own real or biological members. Domestic slaves were used in many tasks, including cultivating fields, building houses and granaries, road and bridge construction, and general menial work. They were also commonly used as defenders or protectors of the families of their masters and mistresses in times of wars. In this way, they were used as soldiers.

Among the Tumbuka, traditionally rich people owned slaves. These were people who were in positions of authority, such as a few headmen, some chiefs, and the king. Those who had plenty of crops also owned slaves, especially in times of famine. Professional hunters also owned slaves to assist them in their profession. Who became slaves? During slavery, few people became slaves. Those who owed some people and were unable to pay back offered themselves to be their slaves. Others offered themselves as slaves to the people who had food during the times of famine. This was a very common way of becoming a slave. Many centuries later, *slave trade* was introduced in the Tumbuka society, and many domestic slaves were sold to local and foreign traders.

SLAVE TRADE

In the history of Zambia, the date 1720 is generally regarded as the time when slave trade began in the country. This was the time when Feira (a Portuguese term meaning 'slave market'), a town at the confluence of Zambezi and Luangwa rivers was established as a trading station. The neighbouring communities—mainly the Soli, the Goba, the Tonga, the Chewa, and the Nsenga—provided slaves for sale to the Portuguese or their agents, the Chikunda, at Feira (*renamed* Luangwa by the Zambian government). On their way to the station, the slaves carried ivory and other goods for sale at the trading station. From about the 1770s, demand for slaves increased, and much of Zambia, especially the eastern part, was devastated by the slave traders. Slaves from here were taken to the slave markets on the East African coast, and others were sent to Brazil in South America.

The concept of selling people or domestic slaves for a profit was unknown not only among the Tumbuka people but also among many other African peoples. However, when foreigners came in their communities, looking for people to buy or exchange with their exotic products, that marked the beginning of a completely new system, the system of selling or buying people, commonly known as the slave trade.

The foreigners who came to look for people to buy in the Tumbuka Kingdom came from the east coast or east of Lake Malawi, where they had their bases. They came from the coastal towns in East Africa. Tumbuka elders talk of Nkhota Kota and Karonga on the western shore of Lake Malawi as the major bases of the Arab slave traders who visited their kingdom. They also mention Jumbe and Mlozi as the notorious slave traders who either visited parts of their land or sent their agents to buy slaves from them.

According to the oral traditions, there were two types of Arab slave traders. There were the few who looked 'whitish', like the *coloured* or *blended* people of mixed blood from the white Arabs (or the Muscat, the true species) and the coastal African *women*. And there were others who were generally called the Swahili or coastal Arabs. These were *black* of a blended group and of mixed blood from the *coloured* Arabs and the coastal and upcountry (interior) African *men and women*. Although they were black people, they were strictly Mohammedan in religion. This group could be subdivided into another larger group of the upcountry natives who adopted the manners and customs of the Muslims and joined the Muslim caravan and usually sported turbans.[93] These Islam black men acted as the Arab traders' guides into the interior.

A large number of the Arab slave traders who visited the M'nyanjagha Kingdom were of this category. They moved in small or big parties. They visited the Tumbuka Kingdom annually, or sometimes they

---

[93] For details on other divisions of the Arab, read an article by H. W. Macmillan, 'Notes on the Origins of the Arab War', in B. Pachai (ed.), *The Early History of Malawi*, footnote 1, pp. 276–277.

remained among the local people all year round, doing their business. If they decided to remain all year round in the communities, they allowed few of their partners to take slaves and ivory to their bases on the east coast and come back later in the year or the following year. The temporary settlements for Arab slave traders later became important centres of settlement for the local people.

The Arab slave traders came with unfamiliar goods into the Tumbuka society to exchange for human beings, the slaves. The commodities included the following: calico (cloth), copper bangles, beads, conus shells (*mphande*), guns and ammunitions, trinkets, and dried sea fish.

The Arab slave traders came to the Tumbuka land using three routes. The routes were in the east–west direction, cutting across the entire Tumbuka Kingdom. There were three main routes. In the north, the route from Lake Malawi passed at Nkhamanga (Chikulamayembe). It went westward, passing at Hebe (Katumbi), before reaching the present Sitwe in Chama North in Zambia. The route continued up to Chikontha, Chibale, and Mulilo and cut across the Muchinga Escarpment before reaching the Bemba Kingdom. There was a subsidiary route from Chikhulamayembe to Kajumba, south of Sitwe. This route went westward and joined the central route in the Luangwa Valley at Lundu and continued to the west, crossing the Muchinga Escarpment before it reached Mpika, the heart of the Bisa people.

Figure 22: *Slaves on their way to the East African Coast to be sold*

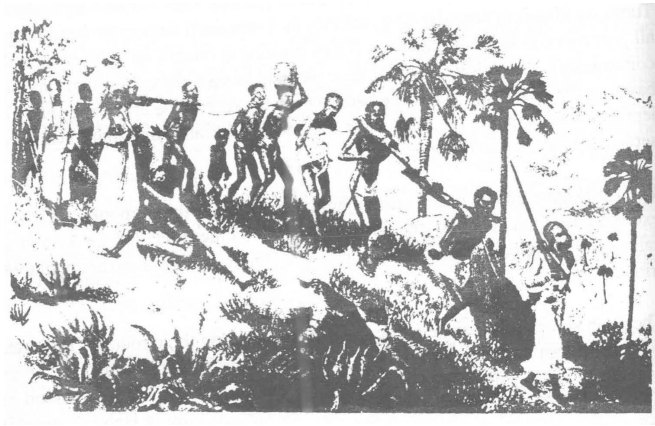


Figure 23: Slaves on their way to the East African Coast to be sold

The second trade route was a central one coming from Lake Malawi and cutting across Kathibi (Mzimba), Lundazi, and Tembwe in the present Chama South; it continued westward, passing through Bisa land and joining the *subsidiary* northern trade route (or Lundu trade route) before reaching Mpika. This route went up to Chief Chiwala's headquarters (in Ndola, Zambia), an important Arab slave traders' centre. An important subsidiary of this route passed through Kazembe in the Chitungulu area south of Lundazi. Kambwiri and Mwanya were also significant slave trade centres on this route.

The Arab slave traders came into the interior primarily to buy slaves and ivory. They also exchanged their merchandise with cattle and various foods for the members of their trading parties. Much ivory came from the chiefdoms of Chamanyavyose, Gumba, Longwe, Mphamba, Chagumuka, Chigoma Zimba, Chiti, and Katongomala, where there were many elephants and very good hunters. Oral records mention Pumbulu Bota as one of the expert elephant hunters in this area.[94]

[94] Macpherson, Seminar–Workshop on Oral Records of Local History, p. 65.

PROCUREMENT OF SLAVES

Contrary to the existing literature on slave trade in the Tumbuka territory, field research has revealed that there were peaceful trade contacts with the Arab slave traders. The traders would come to a village to conduct business with the local people. They stayed on the outskirts of the village. They sent a messenger to the chief or the village headman for permission to do business in the village. If permission was not granted, the traders would continue to another village. However, if permission was granted, the traders would be welcome and allowed to conduct trade in ivory and slaves. The traders would still remain on the outskirts of the village, where business would take place with the local people.

If the elders wanted to sell some people from their village, they would meet secretly to discuss who was to be sold to the Arabs. Slaves were not sold openly but were sold at night. Other items of trade were sold during the day. If slaves were to be sold during the day, prospective slaves (such as captives and children) would flee to other places. This is why the sale of slaves was done at night. The following people were commonly sold as slaves: lazy or cheeky domestic slaves, notorious children, and war captives. As this trade progressed and demand increased in the nineteenth century, anyone moving about alone would be abducted by someone stronger and sold to the Arabs.

One important revelation about the slave trade in the Tumbuka society is that, in most cases, those to be sold to the Arabs did not know that they were being sold as slaves. The elders in the village or the sellers told the sold people many versions of the reasons they were going away with the strangers. For example, they told them that they were leaving the village as porters to assist the traders in carrying the merchandise they bought from the village. They also told them that they were just escorting the traders as porters for a specific distance and will come back to the village afterwards. The Arab slave traders themselves also told those sold as slaves that they were going to be part of their families and will be given partners to marry and increase the traders' families. The black Arab slave traders (the Swahili) would even say, 'We are

going to give you wives to increase our lineages.' Others would say that the people they were going with would be part of the team of the traders, and maybe one day they would meet again. With such false assurances, some parents went ahead and offered their children. They believed that their children would be trained as traders just like the Arabs and that in future they would be on similar trade missions and come back home and meet the families they were about to leave in the village. All these were sweet stories to attract more people to be offered and sold as slaves. Once they were far away from the villages, the slave traders showed their true colours and told them that they were in fact their slaves.

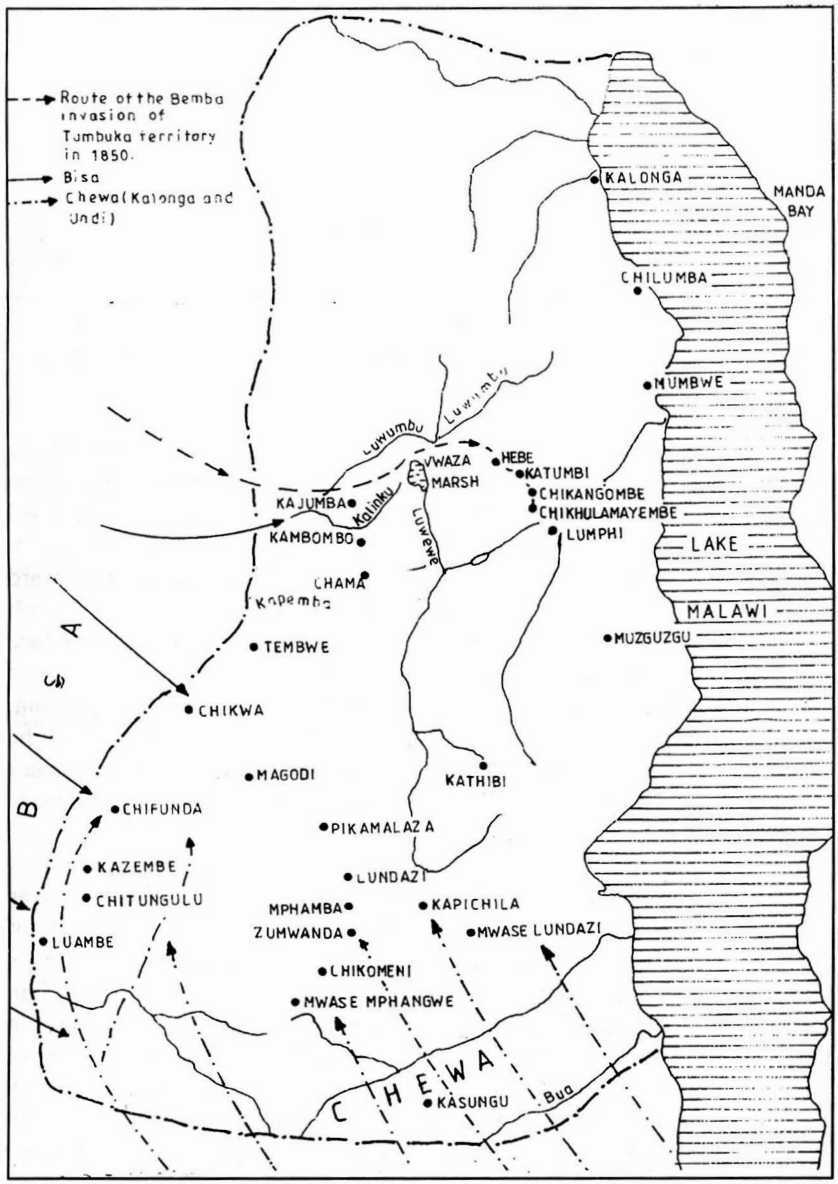
When the Tumbuka knew how to efficiently operate the guns they bought from the Arabs, they were able to kill more elephants and hence sold more ivory to the traders. In order to acquire more guns, hunters also could procure slaves and exchange them for the guns. By the turn of the twentieth century, the elephant population was depopulated in the Tumbuka chiefdoms.

Before slaves could be sold to the traders, the elders discussed the price for each person sold. Normally, an adult male slave could fetch as much as five bundles of calico. A female slave fetched more bundles. Two pieces of ivory could buy a bundle of calico. Two slaves would be enough for a gun and several rounds of ammunition. The Portuguese slave traders offered two bundles of calico for an adult male slave.

Contrary to previous literature about the Arab slave traders, recent research in the Tumbuka society has revealed that the Arab slave traders did not raid any villages in the chiefdoms. This was probably because the Arabs were very few, and even with their firepower, they could have been defeated by the demographically superior local people. The Tumbuka had many iron weapons to fight with. Raids could not have yielded many slaves. Arabs would have found it difficult to trade for a long time in the territory. The local people were going to ambush them and kill them. After all, the slave traders did not know the geography of the areas they visited.

Also, contrary to conventional literature on this topic, Tumbuka chiefs *did not monopolise* slave trade or any other type of trade. Everyone would trade freely with the foreigners or local traders without interference from the chiefs or village headmen. However, in the spirit of traditional courtesy, a share of the merchandise bought by the village headmen would be given to the chief. Also, in the same vein, foreign traders gave chiefs or headmen gifts for three reasons—namely, for allowing them to trade in their areas, for facilitating trade, and to cement relationships for future trade contacts. It was for this reason that many slave traders had their 'usual customers' in many parts of the kingdom.

The Ngoni were not slave traders. They used their male captives in war as soldiers by incorporating them in their armies and used the women as wives. In fact, some of the Tumbuka soldiers in the Ngoni armies even participated in raiding their own neighbours' villages. In reality, when the Ngoni arrived in the Tumbuka territory in the 1850s, slave trade had already been abolished in 1833 by the British government in the British colonies or British areas of influence, which included Tumbuka land. A famous British missionary, Dr David Livingstone, travelled parts of the Tumbuka territory and wrote about the effect of slave trade in the areas as he was told by the local people or as he saw slaves being taken to the east coast by Arab and Swahili slave traders. What he wrote greatly influenced the British government to abolish the slave trade in this area.



Map 8. The arrival of the Bisa and Chewa in Tumbuka Kingdom

CHAPTER TWELVE

ARRIVAL OF THE SOUTHERN NEIGHBOURS: THE CHEWA

INTRODUCTION

The Chewa, under their leader, Ka*r*onga, left Luba Kingdom before 1500 and reached Ka*l*onga in about 1500. They found a small group of the Tumbuka at Kalonga. This was the Tumbuka segment that decided to permanently remain in the present Kalonga District after the death of their leader, Mulonga Mbulalubilo. The Chewa remained in Kalonga with the Tumbuka for a short time.

From about 1510, the Chewa left Kalonga and went southward parallel to Lake Malawi up to the area near the present-day Chipoka in Malawi. There, the Chewa, still under Karonga, established their kingdom and eventually expanded it first southward and later westward to include territories covering the present-day Lilongwe, Dedza, Dowa, and Makewana. Their initial expansion northward was blocked by the presence of the Tumbuka Kingdom that reached as far south as Bua River. Between 1600 and 1650, the Karonga's kingdom expanded to include the territory that later became Undi's kingdom, situated west of Karonga's kingdom. This was an offshoot of the Karonga's main kingdom. Undi's kingdom stretched westward up to lower Luangwa River, south of the Nsenga territory and southward up to Mozambique. In the north, Karonga's kingdom stretched up to the areas under *tributary* or the subking Mkanda (Mkanda Mateyo).

By 1520, the Tumbuka had already established their kingdom that stretched as far south as Kasungu District up to the Bua River, the southernmost boundary of the kingdom. Thus, when the Chewa were expanding northward from Undi's kingdom and Karonga's kingdom, they were in actual fact encroaching into the Tumbuka Kingdom. They found the Tumbuka already firmly established. In fact, the Chewa nicknamed the Tumbuka as the *Wakalimanjira*, 'the hoers of the paths'.[95]As great wanderers in their kingdom, they created, constructed, made or cleared bushes and provide roads, which the Chewa and subsequent ethnic groups used to their advantage. By 1750 the Chewa *subchiefs* under Karonga and Undi had already comfortably settled in the *southern* and *south-west* parts of the Tumbuka Kingdom. They included Kapichila Banda, Mwase (Kasungu) Phiri, Chulu Phiri, Mwase (Lundazi) Phiri, Chikomeni Banda, Mwase Mphangwe Phiri, Kazembe Zozi, Chitungulu Phiri (Mwase wa Minga Mwanya Phiri), Zumwanda Mwale, Kalulumba, Wimbe, Kapelula, and Kanyenda.

Kanyenda, a tributary 'Chewa' king in Karonga's kingdom east of Kapelula bordering Lake Malawi, was certainly not a Chewa subchief but an indigenous Tumbuka subchief. For administrative purposes, Kanyenda was appointed as a Chewa subchief by Karonga when the Chewa encroached on this part of the Tumbuka Kingdom. He was not of the original Chewa clan. This is because the name Kanyenda is very common among the Tumbuka clans and is found as far as north of Chamanyavyose's chiefdom (the present Chama North area). Also, during Baza Dokowe's revolt against the Ngoni rule, many of the rebels (*freedom fighters*) being pursued by the Ngoni impis ran away from Mzimba and took refuge in Mphamba's chiefdom to the south-west and the Kanyenda Chiefdom to the south. Kanyenda welcomed them wholeheartedly. This was certainly because he knew from history that they were fellow Tumbuka.

In fact, the territory that was in the Kanyenda's chiefdom was in reality part of the overall original Tumbuka Kingdom. This is what

---

95 Young, *Notes on the History of the Tumbuka–Kamanga Peoples in the Northern Province of Nyasaland*, p. 23.

Young has revealed in his book *Notes on the History of the Tumbuka–Kamanga Peoples in the Northern Province of Nyasaland*.[96] This is an extremely important revelation with regard to the southward extension of the Tumbuka Kingdom in the pre-Chewa era.

THE TUMBUKA UNDER THE CHEWA CHIEFS

The Chewa chiefs that moved northward from their main kingdoms, Karonga's and Undi's, did so on their own and as a way of registering their semi-political independence from their superiors. For this reason, they eventually became quite independent and did what they wanted to do without consultation with either Karonga or Undi. The Chewa entered the Tumbuka Kingdom peacefully, and their men quickly married Tumbuka women. The Chewa tributary kings that encroached on Tumbuka land allowed the local headmen to continue ruling their subjects, the Tumbuka. This was a form of *indirect* rule. This system allowed the Tumbuka to continue with their way of life without much interference from the *new* rulers in their area. Thus, the Tumbuka people did not 'feel' the political presence of their 'colonisers' from the south.

IMPACT OF THE CHEWA ON THE TUMBUKA

The Chewa administration in the southern fringes of the kingdom did not negatively affect the Tumbuka society. The Tumbuka did not

---

[96] Read chapter 1, especially pages 15–25. The *KiNiassa Dictionary* (written by Rebman, a German missionary working for a British Society, and published in 1877) was in fact a Tumbuka dictionary. 'A large percentage of the words in Rebman's *KiNiassa* Dictionary is pure Tumbuka, hardly differing from the speech to-day' (p. 24), 'Old men in the district of Mwasi [*sic*] Kasungu who have a hazy childhood memory of Livingstone have told me that they were at one time Tumbuka and spoke chiTumbuka' (p. 24).

adopt the Chi-Chewa language. Instead, the Chewa adopted Chi-Tumbuka, the local language of the people they 'colonised'. This was mainly because most Chewa men married Tumbuka women, and the offspring naturally spoke the language of the mother. This has remained up to this day.

Since they are both matrilineal groups, they assisted each other in strengthening their matrilineal marriage practices and customs and the matrilineal inheritance to political power. As we have already learned, it was the Chewa who introduced the vilombo dance in the Tumbuka Kingdom. They also introduced, on a small scale, the *nyau* culture in the southern part of the Tumbuka Kingdom where they settled. The Chewa made *minor* modifications to some Tumbuka marriage practices. However, the modifications were so insignificant that many Tumbuka in the *south* did not see them as *foreign*.

From the mid twentieth century, the issue of inheritance to political power in the Tumbuka Mphamba's chiefdom was complicated by the presence of the Chewa, the southern neighbours of the Tumbuka. However, such issues have not brought any serious conflicts between the two good historical neighbours.

Chewa chiefs are peacefully ruling millions of the Tumbuka in the former Mphamba territories outside the present Mphamba's chiefdom just as the Ngoni chiefs are also ruling millions of Tumbuka peacefully. They live together in unmatched harmony. Chief Mphamba is the only Tumbuka chief ruling the Tumbuka in Lundazi District. The other chiefdoms are headed by either the Chewa or the Ngoni leaders. The same is true in Chama District, where only the current Chief Tembwe (Matthew Khunga) is Tumbuka by origin. The rest of the chiefdoms are headed by Senga leaders. Like the Tumbuka in Lundazi District, the Tumbuka in Chama District live in unprecedented harmony with the Senga in the district.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

ARRIVAL OF THE TRADERS FROM THE EAST: THE BALOWOKA

MLOWOKA AND CHIKHULAMAYEMBE

Sometime between 1770 and 1780, a group of long-distance traders from the Unyamwezi country in central Tanzania crossed Lake Malawi at Manda Bay on the eastern shore and landed at Chilumba on the western shore. From Chilumba, the traders went westward, passing through Chiweta Hills, Phwezi, Njakwa, and Nkhamanga before they spread to other parts of the M'nyanjagha Kingdom. Because these traders or foreigners crossed the lake, the indigenous people, the Tumbuka, called them Balowoka (singular, *Mlowoka*, and also spelt as *Mulowoka*). In classical Chi-Tumbuka, the term *balowoka* means '*those* who have crossed over a body of water'. *Mlowoka* means '*the one* who has crossed over a body of water'. In this case, it meant the ones who had crossed Lake Malawi. Mlowoka or Balowoka was not a name of a person, but a term that identified a group of foreigners or a foreigner who was one of those who had come into Utumbuka from the east after crossing Lake Malawi.

Many foreigners entered Utumbuka before the Balowoka, but it seems they came from other directions—such as west, north, and south—and they did not come from across Lake Malawi. The Balowoka

were somewhat special. They had come from the east of the lake and *crossed* it to reach Utumbuka. If, on their way from the east, these long-distance traders used a different route and did not cross the lake, they were not going to earn the name Balowoka. Many years after the arrival of the Balowoka in the Tumbuka Kingdom, the term *Mlowoka* or *Balowoka* became a praise name. Many Balowokas liked or wanted to be addressed or called by that name.

It is for this reason that, unfortunately, their real names were obscured by the praise name. Thus, earlier scholars—missionaries included—just used *Mlowoka* or *Balowoka* as if these were their real names or as if they were all related to each other or as if they all entered Utumbuka at the *same* time as *one group.* However, recent research on family or clan histories done by Vail in Nkhamanga has revealed the real name of possibly the most important Mlowoka, probably the first one to enter and settle in M'nyanjagha's Tumbuka Kingdom. He was known by various names, such as Kalakala, Kakalala, or Sekulu ('grandfather' in Chi-Tumbuka).

In his work on the history of the Tumbuka–Henga, referred to in chapter one, Saulos Nyirenda popularised the name Chikhulamayembe (also *wrongly* written with Ngoni flavour as Chiku*r*amayembe or Chikulamayembe) from the early 1930s. The local Tumbuka in Nkhamanga area gave the name Chikhulamayembe to Kakalala Mlowoka's *only son*, who took over political power after the death of his father in 1810. After his death, Kakalala Mlowoka's headquarters became known as Chikhulamayembe.

One interesting thing about this name is that Tumbuka oral traditions state that his father, Kakalala Mlowoka, never used this name. He died without ever knowing or using this name. Later, this name became the *title* of all subsequent leaders or chiefs of the *main* line of the Balowoka, Kakalala Mlowoka's clan that settled in Nkhamanga. From the time of the only son of Mlowoka, the name or title has become central in the area and has remained in use today to remind us, possibly, of the *main* line of the Balowoka clan that settled among the Tumbuka.

There is no doubt among the Tumbuka in Lumphi District as to who was the first Mlowoka to settle in their area. The oral traditions conducted among the Tumbuka in the area have revealed that the first Mlowoka in Nkhamanga was called *Kakalala* Chisalanda Mlowoka. They describe him as a light-skinned person who was very kind and extremely generous.[97] He established himself in Nkhamanga area in the chiefdom of Mutimbula of the Luhanga clan.[98] Later, Kakalala married into Mubila Luhanga's family. This politically convenient marriage led to Mubila Luhanga being the most influential member of the clan.

Oral traditions of the Tumbuka on east or west of Nkhamanga confirm the arrival of this famous Mlowoka between 1770 and 1780. He was initially the leader of his *own* Balowoka community in Nkhamanga on 1775. However, by the time he died in 1810, he was also generally accepted as a 'ruler' of *some* of the *local* Tumbuka in some parts of the chiefdom under Mutimbula. However, it is very important to understand that many Tumbuka in Mutimbula's territory *did not* recognise the authority of Kakalala Chisalanda Mlowoka.

---

97 *Excellent* research has been done and is still continuing on the ethnic groups in Northern Malawi in the Department of History, Chancellor College, University of Malawi at Zomba—for instance, S. B. Chirembo's article 'Colonialism and the Remaking of the Chikulamayembe Dynasty, 1904–1953', History Department Seminar 1992/93, paper number 4. Here, Chirembo has provided very useful data for this chapter. The name *Kakalala* means 'arriving [among the people] from nowhere'. The meaning of the name also confirms that he was a *stranger* among the local people.

98 We are very grateful to the following people for their information on Chikulamayembe: Standford Chirwa (sixty-four years old, Mukopeka Village, Chief Zumwanda, Lundazi), who was interviewed on 6 November 2000; Glory Matutu Nyirenda (sixty-nine years old, Mowa Village, Zolokele, Katumbi, Malawi), who was interviewed on 14 December 1998; and Oliver Bota (Nyanjagha) (forty-one years old, Kapemba Village, Chikulamayembe, Malawi), who was interviewed on 9 November 1999.

They only recognised the authority of Chief Mutimbula, who was a *subchief* of the Tumbuka king, M'nyanjagha.

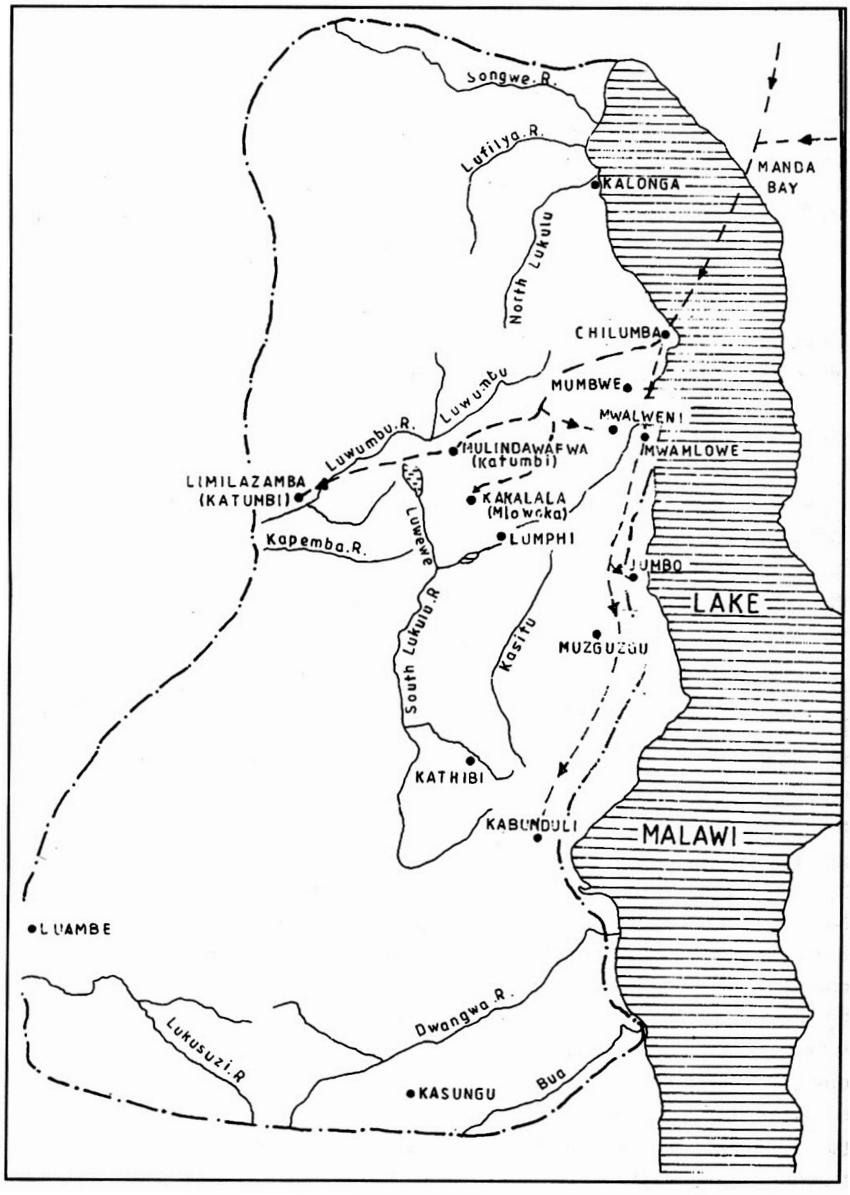
But why did Kakalala Chisalanda Mlowoka lead his group of predominantly Unyamwezi long-distance traders from east of Lake Malawi to Nkhamanga area in the *northern* part of the Tumbuka Kingdom?[99] What was the impact of his rule in Nkhamanga? First, we must know that the Balowoka were long-distance traders who went wherever there were high-value resources in great demand by the customers on the markets of the east coast. Second, they heard stories of plenty of ivory in the territories west of the lake, hence their desire to cross it and reach the areas west of the lake. Third, the land west of the lake indeed abounded in elephants by the end of the eighteenth century and had plenty of ivory. This was what made Kakalala Chisalanda Mlowoka and his group settle permanently in the region west of Lake Malawi. Other prominent Balowoka in the group that permanently settled in this region included Katumbi, Mwamlowe, Jumbo, and Kabunduli.

The Balowoka long-distance traders brought the following items for sale in the Tumbuka Kingdom: cloth, European beads, conus shells, sea salt, and various ornaments. These were exchanged for ivory, animal skins, dried meat, and other food products. The items that the Tumbuka obtained from the Balowoka were the ones that hitherto were lacking in their areas.

How did the Balowoka manage to settle among the indigenous people? As explained in the foregoing paragraphs, the areas in which the Balowoka settled had plenty of high-value items that commanded high prices on the east coast. That was, therefore, the ideal place where to settle and profitably participate in the long-distance trade with the east coast across Lake Malawi.

---

[99] Chirembo, 'Colonialism and the Remaking of the Chikulamayembe Dynasty', p. 3. In his article, Chirembo does not elaborate in detail the source of his assertion that the Balowoka 'traders crossed the lake from the east or Unyamwezi country'.



Map 9. The arrival of Balowoka in Tumbuka Kingdom

From his base at Nkhamanga, where he set up his administrative capital, Kakalala Mlowoka, together with *other* Balowoka in Utumbuka and the lakeshore area among the Tonga, strategically established trade routes in the region, through which the commodities passed as imports from the east and as exports from the region. Like many foreigners in a new place that has economic value to them, the Mlowoka group was very friendly to the local people, especially the local authorities. As noted earlier, the Mlowoka group was also very generous in the terms of trade. More importantly, the way the Mlowoka group entered the new area and the manner in which the group treated the local community quickly won the hearts and the confidence of some members of the Luhanga clan and *some* local Tumbuka within the chiefdom. This is what made them be quickly accepted in the new area.

One would say that, on one hand, the Balowoka had goods to sell to the people, and on the other, they had a gadget sucking the resources of the area and making themselves economically strong. With this economic power, Kakalala Mlowoka was able to tactfully build political power in the area. One way of doing this was by constantly making commercial visits to many parts of Mutimbula's chiefdom. Thus, this way, he linked himself with the strong local political leadership in the chiefdom. Gradually, his commercial visits went beyond Mutimbula's chiefdom to other chiefdoms within M'nyanjagha Kingdom.

Mlowoka made political and economic alliances with many local political leaders in many chiefdoms within M'nyanjagha Kingdom. His alliance with the local authorities was confirmed and sealed by crowning each loyal ally with *kamphumphu*, a dark blue fez or black-cloth turban, and giving him many gifts. The kamphumphu was a sign of prestigious political ties with the economically powerful Mlowoka.[100] That way, he created an enabling political and economic environment for himself, his group, and other Balowoka to trade peacefully.

---

[100] See the picture of the current M'nyanjagha with the turban on his head. Some of his subordinates also wear the same.

After some time, as a way of strengthening his economic power and cementing the already excellent relationship with the local leadership in a number of chiefdoms, Kakalala Mlowoka decided to marry from the most influential clans—the Luhanga and the Kumwenda clans. He first married the sister of Mubila Luhanga, a member of the royal family that dominated the political power in the central Nkhamanga plain. Later, he also married into the Kumwenda or Musopa Daile clan, an offshoot of the Luhanga clan. By marrying into these strong clans, Kalakala Mlowoka assured himself both economic advantage and political security in the region.

Eventually, this was what led to his establishment of an economic hegemony over the central and strategic Nkhamanga area. The area was on the main east–west trade routes and had plenty of elephants, from which a lot of ivory was obtained. His companions within the area and other Balowoka elsewhere in the territory also followed suit by marrying into politically powerful local clans. By 1800, each of the Balowoka west of Lake Malawi had *individually* established his own *economic region*, from which he ensured the safety of the local trade routes and tapped ivory and other resources for his long-distance trade with the east coast. The safety of the goods and people *from* other *economic regions* under the other Balowoka *passing through* the economic regions of the other Balowoka was always guaranteed.

However, this loose economic unity aside and contrary to the available literature on this issue by the early writers (missionaries included), the Balowoka *never ever established any political empire* or kingdom. Similar to what Vail found out on this issue, we have also found no historical evidence to support this belief. There is, however, *strong* evidence that for the sake of economic prosperity, the Balowoka were *interdependent* on each other, but politically, they were *independent* of each other and always remembered to acknowledge each other's political power. An excellent example comes from two Balowoka brothers—namely, Kapungu and Mulindawafwa—discussed in the paragraphs below.

THE BALOWOKA BROTHERS: KAPUNGU AND MULINDAWAFWA AS KATUMBI

M'nyanjagha was aware of the presence of the Balowoka in his kingdom from the time the Balowoka entered the territory in about 1770. He was also aware that they settled in central Nkhamanga region and the area to the east. They had not yet crossed to the western side of his kingdom. However, in about 1775, M'nyanjagha received a report of the presence of foreigners on the north-western part of his kingdom. He immediately sent the bavyaka to the area where they were spotted to investigate the foreigners. But the bavyaka did not find them there. They had moved to Kapemba's chiefdom, and because of this, M'nyanjagha alerted Kapemba about the presence of the strangers in his territory. Kapemba sent people to chase them from his territory. The people he sent met a hunter who confirmed the presence of the Balowoka brothers Kapungu and Mulindawafwa in the mountain. Kapungu was the elder brother, and both of them were from the Chabinga (also spelt *Chawinga*) clan, part of a larger group of the Balowoka that entered M'nyanjagha Kingdom.[101]

To make sure that these strangers were tracked down and brought to the king, Kapemba appointed his brother to 'watch over' the stones, rocks, and the mountain. For this reason, his brother was later known as Kalindamawe (rock overseer). He set up his village in the mountain. While there, he confirmed that the strangers were indeed living in the mountain, but at that time, they had shifted from where they were living to another place within the mountain. There were visible signs of abandoned temporary shelters. In many places in the mountain, the strangers had removed many pieces of rock. Again, the hunter told Kalindamawe that the Chabinga brothers he was looking for were staying in another mountain which they named Themba, which means 'something you can rely on', such as a *chief* or a *king*. This is how the term *themba* came to mean 'chief'. The chief's (or Themba) mountain was within the larger Kalindamawe Mountain.

---

[101] The name Chabinga means 'the one who scares away animals'.

From the Themba Mountain, the Chabinga brothers decided to part and live separately in different areas, each going with his supporters. Kapungu chose to settle on the north-western area of Themba Mountain. The younger brother, Mulindawafwa, chose to settle on the eastern side of the mountain. Unaware of the owner of the area, Kapungu went north with his group and settled in Nchuka's territory. Here, they found Nchuka in the upper Luwumbu River. On the western part, there was Chikontha, who together with Nchuka were subchiefs of Nyanjagha Chama. The place Kapungu occupied is what is known today as Sitwe in Chama North. He established his chiefdom there, sandwiched between Chikontha and Nchuka. He named it Themba Katumbi. This was in about 1780.

At Sitwe, in the area where he established the seat of his government, every year people's crops were being swept away by the annual floods (*zamba*) of the Luwumbu River. His presence did not change this seasonal natural phenomenon. For this reason, Kapungu was later known as Limilazamba or Mulimilazamba (cultivating crops for the floods). Much of Sitwe area is a very wide river valley that is prone to annual flooding. The flood silt makes the valley soils extremely fertile, and as a result, people in this area have two distinct growing seasons: one during the rainy season (November to April) and the other during the dry season (May to September). In the dry season, people grow their crops in the *moist soils* of the wide river valley. When crops, especially maize (from the late nineteenth century) and beans, are grown during the dry season in this way—using *only moisture in the soils* and without the use of any form of irrigation—it is called *nyata*.

Mulindawafwa went east and settled in a plain with plenty of *musangu* (or *musangusangu*) trees. Traditionally, these trees are found in places that are very fertile; hence, Mulindawafwa and his people settled in this place, a part of which is Vwaza Marsh. As we learned in the previous chapters, this area was under the leadership of Nyanjagha Mowa of the Kadono Nyirenda clan. Some of the local traditional authorities in this area that were invaded by Mulindawafwa were Chiwulukutu, also known as Zolokele Khunga, and Khutamaji also known as Kachali (also spelt *Kachale*). Slowly and as tactful as Kakalala Mlowoka did in Nkhamanga, Mulindawafwa wielded both

economic and political power and became the overall leader.[102] He became known as Themba Mulindawafwa Katumbi of Hewe.[103]

The praise name for the Chabinga group of the Balowoka is still: 'Yewo Nyomilo masakantacha lemba lankunda'. In the mid nineteenth century, a reigning Katumbi in Hewe started an annual ceremony known as Mulindafwa in memory of the death of their first leader, Mulindawafwa (the watchman is dead). It was initiated primarily as a way of officially legitimising their position in Hewe, the area where the local authorities *did not welcome* them. It was also a ceremony at which the ruling class could reflect on their short history that has since been greatly glorified so much.

Basically, their history centres on how their leaders came to Kalindamawe (later also became known as Themba) Mountain and temporarily lived in the mountain. Their short history is also about how their leaders sat on a piece of *rock* in the Themba Mountain, stood on it to view the land they were going to share, and how they shared the land to the east and to the west of the mountain. The most important thing that Chief Katumbi shows the people who attend the annual ceremony is a piece of the *rock* that is believed to be the one Mulindawafwa and his older brother, Kapungu, sat on and later Mulindawafwa collected and went with it before they parted. It has been kept in the family since then.

Kalindamawe continued with his task of making sure that there were no illegal settlements in the many mountains in Kapemba's chiefdom. One day, he came to a mountain where he thought he heard the sounds of people talking and shouting, 'Ho ho ho ho.' But that was

---

[102] Our informants stated that Kakalala Chisalanda was the nephew of Kapungu and Mulindawafwa. This was new information for us, and maybe more research need to be carried out in the field before we can take it as a *historical fact.*

[103] Mulindawafwa came with the Chipofya group that is also known as Nundwe. The Nundwe group has villages closer to Chief Zolokele Khunga (Chiwulukutu), who is Senior Chief Mulindawafwa (commonly known as Katumbi).

just an illusion. The sounds of people talking were in fact the sounds of monkeys playing in the mountains. That mountain was later named Homani Bantu (scared people) after the sounds in the area that were misinterpreted by Kalindamawe as those of the scared people. When Kalindamawe was given this area by his brother, Kapemba Jumbu, he was very happy and praised himself that he was now a *mukulama* (a big one also). Calling himself by the praise name for a long time earned him a permanent name—Mukulama (also commonly spelt *M'kulama*)—instead of Bota, the real clan name.

Tumbuka oral traditions have revealed that the first Kalindamawe was the grandfather of Thandamalaga Bota of the Mbuluko line. He had an elder brother whose name is not remembered by the key informants. However, Musanya's elder brother, Zuwula Bota, had a son by the name of Sukusuku John Bota. Musanya's own sons were Fightwell Bota and Watson Bota. The Bota line of the Tumbuka has lived in Sitwe area, a part of the Chamanyavyose's chiefdom for over three hundred years. As stated above, after many years, the Kalindamawe line of the Bota erroneously accepted or continued with the name or nickname that Kalindamawe chose—M'kulama (a big one)—instead of their real surname or clan name, Bota. Therefore, by origin, the M'kulamas are Botas.

Kalindamawe Thandamalaga was a younger brother of Kapemba Jumbu. The eldest son of Kapemba Jumbu was Mgwela na Banangwa (fighting with relatives). His son took the name Jumbu; he was the father of Samu, whose son was Muyombo. Muyombo was the father of Alick, whose son is Lifted, the present (2002) Mgwela, and the present Kapemba is Oliver.

THE ORIGIN OF THE NAME CHIKHULAMAYEMBE

To date, the correct origin of the term or name Chikhulamayembe is not known. We know that it appeared and came into use for the first time during the reign of Mlowoka's only son, Gonapamuhanya,

also known as Khalapamuhanya.[104] Thus, Gonapamuhanya was called Gonapamuhanya Chikhulamayembe or just Chikhulamayembe. The name Chikhulamayembe became the *title* of his chieftaincy. He was, in fact, the second Mlowoka and also the first Chikhulamayembe from 1810. Traditions describe him as 'stout, jolly and fond of fighting . . . owner of many wives and the father of numerous sons and daughters'.[105] There are three explanations as to how the name could have been started.

First, it is thought that the term *chikuramayembe* is a corruption of the original Kiswahili term *chukuwamajembe.* In Kiswahili, the word *chukuwa* means 'to carry', and the word *majembe means* 'hoes'. Possibly, the members of Mlowoka's group were carrying hoes without handles as items of trade, and from this activity, the name Chikuramayembe was born. This was possibly because of the ignorance of the local people and the likeness in sound between an unknown word (*Chukuwa*majembe) and one of their own (*Chikhula*majembe). Thus, the name had something to do with the *imported* hoes. We know that the Tumbuka were traditionally manufacturing the hoes and wooden handles long before the arrival of the Balowoka. For this reason, hoes, though *imported*, could not have become *significant* articles of trade for the Balowoka in an area of people who were experts at manufacturing the same items.

The name Chikulamayembe was given to Mlowoka by the Phoka, a division of the Tumbuka that lived between Rumphi and Chitimba rivers. These people were expert manufacturers of hoes before and during Mlowoka's era. They are the ones who supplied Mlowoka with hoes that he dispensed as gifts to influential clans. It did not take time before the Phoka started calling him Chikulamayembe, a corruption of the Kiswahili term *chikuwa majembe*, which means 'to carry hoes'

---

104 In Chi-Tumbuka, the names Khalapamuhanya or Gonapamuhanya mean the same thing, and that is 'sleeping or sitting in the sun or sunbathing'. According to oral traditions, he did this because he was frail and sickly.

105 Young, *Notes on the History of the Tumbuka–Kamanga Peoples in the Northern Province of Nyasaland,* p. 82.

and, in this context, 'the one who carries or dispenses hoes'. After some time, the name Chi*ku*lamayembe became Chi*khu*lama*ye*mbe.[106]

Second, it is possible that after Mlowoka's death in 1810, his son, Gonapamuhanya, who took over the throne, could have made people pay tribute in the form of handle-less hoes. Thus, people who had their hoes already in the handles were made to loosen them and pull them out (*ku khula*) before taking them to Gonapamuhanya as tribute. This could have been the beginning of the term *khulamayembe* (pull out your hoes). The prefix *chi* meant 'size' or 'importance' given to the appropriate title or the ruler by whom the command was issued, hence *chikuramayembe*.

In Chi-Tumbuka, the correct pronunciation is chi*khula*ma*je*mbe or chi*khula*ma*ye*mbe, meaning 'the one that commands them [subjects] to pull out the hoes from their wooden handles and take them as payment for tributes'. Gonapamuhanya, the second Mlowoka, must have been the first leader to institute the hoe tribute, and this action earned him the name Chikhulamayembe, which he eventually accepted and used as his chiefly title and as the name for his headquarters, the main village in the chiefdom. The only problem with this explanation is to find out how or where Gonapamuhanya took or used the thousands of hoes he got as tribute. Where did Gonapamuhanya take all the thousands of hoes (local or imported) he collected as tributes? He could not have redistributed them as everyone in society had adequate numbers for farming purposes. We have found no historical records or oral traditions to support the notion that Gonapamuhanya sent them to the east coast as articles of long-distance trade.

The other explanation for the source of the name Chikhulamayembe could be that it comes from the local name for a mango fruit. *Yembe* is a local name for mango. Maybe, for some

[106] There are good discussions on the origin of the name Chikulamayembe in B. Pachai, *Malawi: The History of the Nation* (London: Longman, 1973), p. 11, and also in Young, *Notes on the History of the Tumbuka–Kamanga Peoples in the Northern Province of Nyasaland,* pp. 82–83.

reason, Gonapamuhanya started asking people from each village to pluck thousands of mangos from the trees and take them to the chief's palace. The action of plucking a *mango* from the tree is in Chi-Tumbuka known as *khuba yembe* (singular) or *khuba mayembe* (plural). This was corrupted to *khulamayembe*. The one who instituted such an activity was Gonapamuhanya, and hence, he earned himself the name Chikhulamayembe. The problem we have is proving that there were many mango trees in Nkhamanga area during the period in question. Also, we have to prove that either this fruit is a native of the area or that it was brought into the M'nyanjagha Kingdom by the Tumbuka themselves. The first explanation is more acceptable as it has more evidence to back it up than the other two.

Gonapamuhanya had three sons—namely, Pitamkusa, Chayeka (also known as Bwati), and Mwembe. None of his three sons ascended to power after Gonapamuhanya died. His nephew, Kampungu, a Tumbuka, became the second Chikhulamayembe, taking over from his uncle in a typical Tumbuka way of ascending to political power. We are not very sure why this was done like this—different from what happened when Mlowoka died. There was a clash of cultures. Gonapamuhanya was from a patrilineal culture; the Balowoka were patrilineal. Kampungu was from a matrilineal culture. The oral traditions do not provide the reasons for this change from patrilineal inheritance to political power (as was the case from Mlowoka to Gonapamuhanya, the son) to matrilineal inheritance to power as was the case from Gonapamuhanya to Kampungu, the nephew. However, it could have been that the direct heirs were at the time too small to succeed. So Kampungu was put there as a *regent*. It could also be that he was chosen to succeed his uncle because he was of very good character.

Whatever the reasons, Kampungu Nkonjela from the Tumbuka Nkonjela clan became the second Chikhulamayembe. He was the son of a local man from the Nkonjela family who married Mlowoka's daughter. Originally, the Nkonjela family lived near Nkonjela hill, and named themselves after its name, but they were under Mutimbula. Marrying into Mlowoka's family made the Nkonjela family one of the

important Tumbuka families in Nkhamanga because Nkonjela's son, Kampungu, was a grandson of Kakalala Mlowoka and also a nephew of Gonapamuhanya.

Tumbuka oral traditions have revealed that Kampungu was not a good chief. He was very cruel and did not cooperate with his relatives in the royal family. He was a paranoid and feared of the unknown danger, and as a result, he chased away all his rivals. The people he chased included his cousins, sons of Gonapamuhanya, and his mother's sisters, Mlowoka's daughters. People hated Kampungu together with his nephew Chimundavwa, who was his very close associate. During his regime, he fought in vain wars of expansion with the Chewa and the Tonga.

The local people were tired of his cruelty and organised a plot to kill him and his nephew. This was in actual fact a coup d'état to replace him with a good leader. The plot to kill him was arranged by the exiled members of the royal family. The coup d'état was led by Pitamkusa, Gonapamuhanya's eldest son.

Kampungu and his nephew Chimundavwa were tricked by the people to temporarily move out of their permanent houses on the pretext that they were going to build thorn enclosures around the houses to protect them from dangerous animals. The two agreed and moved into the temporary houses. One day at dawn, bowmen with arrows came and surrounded the two houses where Kampungu and Chimundavwa were sleeping. They were told to come out of the houses, and as they emerged out of the houses, the bowmen speared each one of them until they both died. Thereafter, the people in Nkhamanga vowed *never* to have *nephews* ascend to political power *again*, as stated in the following paragraph:

> When he came out he found the line drawn up of bowmen with arrows on the string. As the King is seen all bend before him, the leaders and all their men. Said the King 'Is it peace, ye people?' They reply, 'There is no peace' And he asks, 'Is it thus also at Chimundavwa's?' hoping that they may have forgotten to guard him and that he may come with aid. But they reply, 'There also

> there are people,' at which the heart of the King fell and the order was given to fire the place. At this the King re-entered the house and dashed the contents of the water-pots and beer-pots over his clothes. Then he took his weapons and came out again, to find arrows pointed at him on every side. As he stands he is struck down and the shout is raised
>
> Kampungu kamhoto O!
>
> (Oh Kampungu, there is your pay)
>
> While at Chimundavwa's the same is done. So the land rests and no more do 'nephews' ascend the throne of Nkhamanga.[107]

After killing them, Pitamkusa cut off their toes and fingers and put them in six bundles. The bundles were sent to the territorial districts and the neighbouring territories to show them that indeed the chief was dead and also as evidence that the killing of Kampungu marked the return of political power to the *rightful* (that is, *patrilineal*) heirs. Kampungu was buried at a spot about eight kilometres west of the confluence of Runyina and Rukuru rivers, near Mlowoka's first village, some few kilometres from the present main village.[108]

After the death of Kampungu, inheritance to political power was reverted to the patrilineal system; hence, Pitamkusa became the third Chikhulamayembe. His successor was his brother Chayeka also known as Bwati the First, who became the fourth Chikhulamayembe in about 1835. Bwati the Second, his son, succeeded him and became the fifth Chikhulamayembe in about 1845.

Mwembe, Gonapamuhanya's son, was physically disabled after an injury to his leg that left it very stiff. When he walked, the stiff leg

---

[107] Young, *Notes on the History of the Tumbuka–Kamanga Peoples in the Northern Province of Nyasaland*, pp. 88–89.

[108] The other story from the field is that because Kampungu was very cruel to his subjects, they became angry and burned him alive in the house.

created a furrow behind. At one time, when people found a furrow created by his stiff leg, they thought it was an imprint created by a water monitor, locally called *mbulu*, also commonly called *mbulu gondwe*. Mwembe adopted the name Gondwe, and eventually it became a clan name for all male and female descendants of the Kakalala Mlowoka family in Nkhamanga. Kanyasho is also a clan name for a *female* Gondwe. This is how the name Gondwe started. It is a Tumbuka name and Tumbuka in origin, not Mlowoka.[109]

Bamantha (meaning, *to mould or shape*) was the son of Chayeka (Bwati the First). He was among the royal family members who were chased away by Kampungu. He succeeded his brother Bwati the Second as the sixth Chikhulamayembe [or Khulamayembe] in 1850. It was during Bamantha's rule that the Bemba, under Chitimukulu Chileshe Chipele (Chipera or Chepele), invaded Kajumba, Hewe, Mulindawafwa Katumbi, and Luvili River area near Chikang'ombe (Chikhang'ombe) hill.[110] They also invaded Bamantha's territory and settled at Bururuji and Kawuwu. Bamantha asked for help from Chungu (Kyungu) in Kalonga. Chungu's warriors used the Nthalire–Hebe route and

---

[109] Interestingly enough, Chirembo, in his article 'Colonialism and the Remaking of the Chikulamayembe Dynasty', says that Mlowoka was later 'popularly known by the full name of Kakalala Msawira Gondwe' (p. 3). This is wrong because the names Chikulamayembe and Gondwe only appeared many years after Mlowoka Kakalala's death.

[110] Andrew Roberts, *History of the Bemba: Political Growth and Change in North-Eastern Zambia before 1900* (London: Longman, 1973). Roberts, in his unnecessarily detailed history of the Bemba, does not mention this invasion of M'nyanjagha Kingdom by the Bemba during Chitimukulu Chileshe Chepele. It is also interesting that the name Chikang'ombe appears as the name of the first chief in the Chewa Mwase Lundazi's family tree. The Chewa Mwase Lundazi came from south of Kasungu District, where the Chewa set up their Karonga's kingdom in the territory that was originally Tumbuka's (north of Bua River). For details, see NAZ KST 3/1 Lundazi District Notebook Vol.1. 1908–1963. In Chi-Tumbuka, the name Chikang'ombe means 'take or bring the cattle down the hill'.

counterattacked the Bemba from the rear. With this help from the north, the Bemba were quickly chased away from the areas they occupied near the capital, Chikhulamayembe.[111] However, the Bemba put up a strong resistance and fought a very fierce battle at Kawuwu, where they stockaded the area. However, the highly experienced Tumbuka bowmen used heated arrows to burn the stockaded village, and this forced the enemies to go back to their home.

The first to succeed Bamantha was Mujuma, from the house of Bwati the First, who stayed on the throne for a very short time before being replaced by Mkuwayila as the real seventh Chikhulamayembe in 1855. He was the son of one of Pitamkusa's brothers. In the tradition of the Tumbuka, Mkuwayila was therefore also a 'son' of Bamantha. He was the Chikhulamayembe that the Ngoni found in Nkhamanga.[112] He was killed by the Ngoni impis, and his death marked the end of the Chikhulamayembe chieftaincy for the next fifty years of the Ngoni domination, 1855 to 1907.

This means that the overall Balowoka rule among the Tumbuka of Nkhamanga lasted from 1775 to 1855, a period of eighty years only. The Chikhulamayembe chieftaincy was only revived by the British in 1907 to help them administer northern Nyasaland (Malawi) through the system of indirect rule. There have been only three Chikulamayembe chiefs since 1907. From June 1907 to

---

111 Young, *Notes on the History of the Tumbuka–Kamanga Peoples in the Northern Province of Nyasaland,* p. 68. Young refutes the story that the Ngonde (Nkonde) helped Chikulamayembe drive the Bemba under Kyepele. He says that it was the Muyombe segment of the Tumbuka that asked for help from Kyungu of the Ngonde. Consequently, it was the Muyombe group that drove the Bemba out of their stockades at Muyombe, to Milonga.

112 Chirembo, 'Colonialism and the Remaking of the Chikulamayembe Dynasty', p. 8. Chirembo puts the Chikulamayembe that the Ngoni found in 1855 as the eighth one. However, B. Pachai, in his article 'Ngoni Politics and Diplomacy in Malawi: 1848–1904' (*The Early History of Malawi*, p. 191), puts the Chikulamayembe the Ngoni found in 1855 as the sixth one and names him as Bwati (which one?).

1931, Mbawuwo 'Chilongozi' Gondwe was the Chikulamayembe, followed by John Hardy Gondwe from 1932 to 1977. The current Chikulamayembe is Walter Gondwe, who came to power after the death of his father in 1977.

THE TUMBUKA UNDER THE BALOWOKA CHIEFS

The Balowoka long-distance traders entered the Tumbuka territory in small family groups or business partners. Others may have come as individuals. We are told that these traders from east of Lake Malawi were very good and are remembered for their generosity. After staying among the local people for a long time, they married the local women. That was one way of assimilating the local culture and understanding the people better. Since the Balowoka were traders, they accumulated a lot of wealth. It was their wealth that made them attain an elevated status in society. With their wealth, the Balowoka were able to assist many people in society. After some time, they increased their political power in the chiefdom where they settled. Initially, only a few people accepted their political power, but gradually, the Balowoka were able to rule over a large population of the local people.

No single Mlowoka or a number of Balowoka ever ruled the *entire* M'nyanjagha Kingdom. There were large portions of the kingdom that had not at all been affected by the rule of the Balowoka. This was very true of the many chiefdoms in the northern part of the M'nyanjagha Kingdom other than the affected Nkhamanga, Hewe, and Chama North areas. The southern, eastern, and western parts of the kingdom were not affected by the Balowoka rule.

The Balowoka ruled the Tumbuka through a system of indirect rule. That was a system whereby the Balowoka ruled the Tumbuka through the existing traditional political structures. Wherever they ruled, the Balowoka left the Tumbuka local traditional authorities to rule over their people according to their custom and creed. Thus, the grass-roots rulers at village level—or in some cases, at subchief level—within the chiefdom were the indigenous people. The appointing authorities were

the local people, and the Balowoka rarely rejected such appointments. This system of rule made it difficult for the Balowoka to change the Tumbuka way of life. Additionally, the fact that the Balowoka control did not affect the whole of M'nyanjagha Kingdom, in the areas where it was, it had little impact on the Tumbuka way of living.

IMPACT OF THE BALOWOKA ON THE TUMBUKA

The Balowoka and their economic activities were basically concentrated in the northern Tumbuka area. For this reason, we shall focus on their impact in the north. Already, we have explained in the foregoing paragraphs that the Balowoka were long-distance traders from east of Lake Malawi. We have also explained that, other than their so-called 'leader', Kakalala Mlowoka, many other Balowoka settled in different parts of the Tumbuka territory in the north and married the local women from politically prominent clans. They started their own families and gradually began building their political power among the already politically strong and demographically superior Tumbuka. Apart from their foreign origin, the Balowoka were completely assimilated into the Tumbuka society.

In many precolonial African societies, the histories are about the economically powerful intruders gradually gaining or usurping political power from the indigenous people. This was no exception in the Tumbuka society. The few Balowoka who settled in the M'nyanjagha's territory used their strong economic power to gradually usurp the Tumbuka political power wherever they settled. The Balowoka children born of local wives quickly accelerated the process of usurping political power from the local people. The children were by birth 'citizens' of the M'nyanjagha Kingdom. Their fathers *were* still considered *foreigners.* It was this first generation of the children of the Balowoka who later on, as we shall discover in the underlying paragraphs, became chiefs of the various Balowoka-created 'Tumbuka' chiefdoms. This was the beginning of the *myth* that these first-generation *patrilineal* leaders were *indigenous* Tumbuka by origin. The truth is that they were not because their fathers were not indigenous Tumbuka; only their mothers were.

We have also explained that the Tumbuka practised matrilineal hereditary inheritance of political office. However, the Balowoka introduced into the chiefdoms they controlled the patrilineal ascension to political power. If the Balowoka were indeed either the Yao or the Makuwa people from east of Lake Malawi, as hinted by Vail, then they were a matrilineal group.[113] This is because scholars have shown that people from east of Lake Malawi were matrilineal and practised matrilineal succession of political power. Thus, when they arrived, the Balowoka found the Tumbuka practising matrilineal system of inheritance to political power. But because they were a foreign group in other people's land, this system of inheritance could have been a serious threat to their accumulated wealth. In a foreign territory, they could only leave their wealth with their biological sons. However, if they were indeed from Unyamwezi in central Tanzania, as alluded to above, then they were patrilineal by origin, and this then explains what they did in the areas they settled.

Whatever happened can be explained in this way: Kakalala Mlowoka married the sister of Mubila Luhanga, in which case, by matrilineal tradition, it would have been appropriate for Mlowoka's son, Gonapamuhanya, who was also the nephew to Mubila Luhanga, to become the chief.[114] But Gonapamuhanya did not ascend to power when Mubila Luhanga died. By the time Luhanga was dying, Kakalala Mlowoka had already usurped power from him. Thus, when Mlowoka died, it was Mlowoka's son, Gonapamuhanya who ascended to power, putting into practice the patrilineal system of ascending to political

---

[113] Vail, 'Suggestions towards a Reinterpreted Tumbuka History', p. 154; Young, *Notes on the History of the Tumbuka–Kamanga Peoples in the Northern Province of Nyasaland*, p. 37; Edward A. Alpers, 'The Role of the Yao in the Development of Trade in East-Central Africa, 1698–c.1850', PhD thesis (University of London, 1966), p. 206.

[114] Chirembo, 'Colonialism and the Remaking of the Chikulamayembe Dynasty', p. 4. Chirembo states that Kakalala Mlowoka had married into the Luhanga and Kumwenda clans. But it was Nyakumwenda, the wife from the Kumwenda clan, who bore him a son, Gonapamuhanya, also known as Khalapamuhanya.

power. Except for the short period of Kampungu, the system has remained like this to this day. Unfortunately, *many* Tumbuka clans, especially those in the northern region of the M'nyanjagha Kingdom, later on adopted this system brought by the Balowoka.

The Balowoka therefore did not alter or add anything significant to the prevailing matrilineal system of succession of political power in the Tumbuka society. They did not interfere in this area by exerting unnecessary pressure on the Tumbuka. They just left it intact and only introduced their own patrilineal system of inheriting political power. The two ran side by side. However, the two very different systems could not peacefully coexist without affecting each other. One was bound to be absorbed by the other. This is exactly what happened in some parts of the kingdom.

Unfortunately, it was the Tumbuka clans themselves and on their own accord that *adopted* the *foreign* system of inheriting political power through the *patrilineal* system. Beginning with a few, the foreign system gradually spread to include many Tumbuka clans. The chiefly regalia of wearing *kapopo*, the ritual axe over the shoulder, was already in practice for the chiefs (nyanjaghas) only and not the king (M'nyanjagha). However, the Balowoka introduced a dark-blue or black cloth, the turban (similar to a fez), which is locally called *kamphumphu*; this was initially crowned on allies as a vivid sign of their political alliance with the Balowoka. However, later on, this regalia became *adopted* by the local leadership in many parts of the M'nyanjagha Kingdom as a chiefly regalia.

With economic power and strong political tentacles in specific economic zones in the north in the nineteenth century, the Balowoka gradually but firmly turned their *economic zones* or *spheres of economic influence* into *chiefdoms*. The base of political power in each of these spheres of economic influence was the respective 'Mlowoka's palace'. This was a *loose* form of 'centralised' system; in this case, it was more economic than political centralisation. To the northern Tumbuka, this was definitely *not* an innovation brought in by the foreigners. The Tumbuka in their kingdom had lived in a centralised political system up to the arrival of the Balowoka.

The south was not affected by the impact of the Balowoka. It remained under the same chiefdoms and the same indigenous chiefs. That was the situation the British colonial administrators found when they took over the southern segment of the M'nyanjagha Kingdom. The Balowoka introduced new skills in trading in the area. The Tumbuka for the first time had economic value for the ivory they thought was useless beyond wearing it as bangles. The Tumbuka were also only 'using ivory as [bangles], seats and bed props without any idea of its value'. For this reason, there developed among the Tumbuka, classes of professional hunters (fundi) and professional traders who became rich and highly respected in society, the *basambazi*.

There also emerged a class of people specialised in manufacturing weapons with which to kill elephants and other large animals. The weapons included big knives, long spears, and axes forged from locally smelted iron. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the Tumbuka were able to locally make excellent imitations of the European guns. The imitations were in fact stronger in firepower than the European guns and also used locally manufactured ammunitions. The guns were in fact like the European muzzle-loaders, which were locally called *mudundula* or *mudududu,* named after the sound the guns produced when fired.

The term *mambo* was a praise name for leaders in traditional society in pre-Balowoka era. During the Balowoka era, both terms, *mambo* and *balowoka*, became praise names but were addressed specifically to pre-Balowoka clan leaders and Balowoka leaders respectively. The Tumbuka never forgot and still do not forget this distinction. It reminds them of the leaders who come from the indigenous rulers and those who do not.

For easy transportation of the ivory and other items of trade from the interior and those coming from the east coast, the Balowoka traders developed an excellent network of trade routes. Later, the same routes were used by slave traders that devastated this region in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. The main trade route followed the direction of Chinsali to Isoka to Chama North (Sitwe) to Katumbi

(Hebe) to Chikhulamayembe to Lake Malawi. Others were: Mpika to Chama South to Kajumba to Katumbi (Hebe) to Chikhulamayembe, and Bembaland to Muyombe to Katumbi (Hewe) to Khulamayembe. As can be seen, Nkhamanga, especially Chikhulamayembe, the capital, was the crossroad of the nineteenth-century trade routes. This greatly enhanced Chikhulamayembe's economic and political power in the area. See Map 7 for the trade routes.

One of the Balowoka, Themba Katumbi Mulindawafwa, introduced the famous Mulindafwa ceremony in his chiefdom. As pointed out above, the Mulindafwa ceremony legitimised and strengthened his political power in the area, especially after he did not receive much support from the Tumbuka in Hebe (Hewe) area, north of his palace. This was also a way of making the Tumbuka, particularly the young generations, think that his ruling family was indigenous by origin when in fact this is not the case. The ceremony was an annual event attracting thousands of people in his chiefdom, including many from his brother's chiefdom, Themba Limilazamba Katumbi, an area in the northern part of Chief Chamanyavyose's territory.

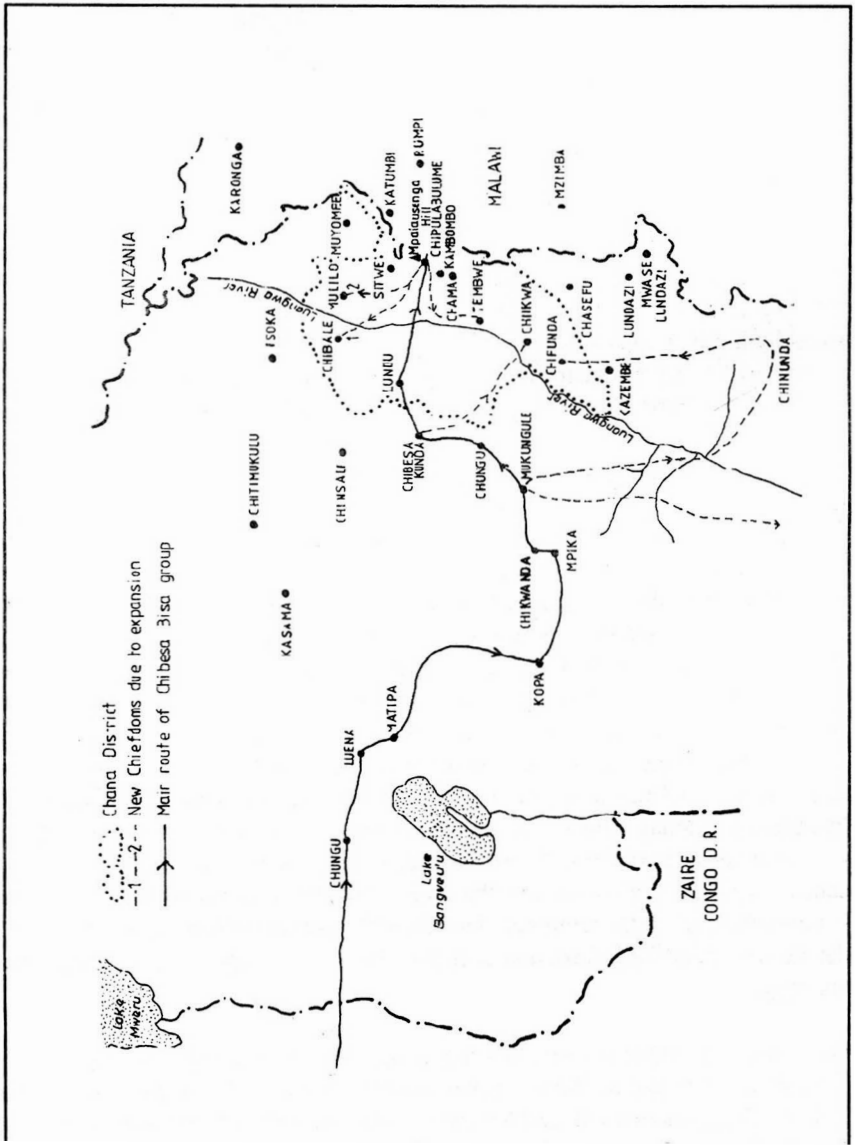
From the time of Kakalala Mlowoka, the Balowoka are known to interfere in the political affairs of the Tumbuka, the people they 'colonised' in 1775. This is how Mlowoka usurped political power from Mubila Luhanga in Nkhamanga. Political interference by the Chikhulamayembe increased in the nineteenth century as a way of showing the missionaries and colonial administrators that they were the overall Tumbuka senior chiefs. For instance, when M'nyanjagha Longwe II was too old, he asked Mufwanyota to act in his position as the king. When M'chintha's son of Chanangika heard that M'nyanjagha Longwe II had asked Mufwanyota to act as M'nyanjagha, he was not happy. As a result, he decided to find ways of how he could be the next M'nyanjagha instead of Mufwanyota. This was so because M'chintha knew that by tradition he could not ascend to the political position of M'nyanjagha. To achieve his goal of becoming M'nyanjagha, M'chintha solicited for support from Chikhulamayembe, who indeed 'confirmed' him as M'nyanjagha.

This was very unusual to have a M'nyanjagha imposed on the Tumbuka by an *outsider*. This was the time that Mufwanyota named himself as Wajontha na Banangwa (wrestling for political power with family members). Wajontha told M'chintha that he was not the real M'nyanjagha because people did not choose him. Two weeks after receiving this message from Wajontha, M'chintha died mysteriously. This was the only time in the history of the Tumbuka that there were two M'nyanjaghas—the old man Longwe II and M'chintha—which was for only two weeks. Later, Chikhulamayembe confessed to having interfered in M'nyanjagha issue but also accepted that he was misguided by M'chintha. Wajontha (also known as Mufwanyota) became the full M'nyanjagha after Longwe II died. Wajontha even fought in the First European (World) War.

As noted earlier, in 1925, Wajontha requested the government to revive the chieftaincy of M'nyanjagha that was discontinued by the Ngoni. He wanted his position as M'nyanjagha back, but the British government refused and fined him half a crown (two shillings and six pence) for his utterances. He never talked about the chieftaincy again till his death.

The Balowoka did bring some changes to the traditional marriages. As a patrilineal group, when they married the Tumbuka women, they did not completely observe the matrilocal arrangements. After staying in the wife's village for a short time, the Balowoka would go back with their wives to their own villages. This was called kusompola, as explained in the chapter on marriages.

Another important thing that was a result of the Balowoka rule was the practice by many Tumbuka clans of abandoning their original Tumbuka names and adopting the so-called ruling-class names. Perhaps in the long run that was one way of probably raising the status of their clans in society.



Map 10. The arrival of the Bisa in Chamanyavyose Chiefdom

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

ARRIVAL OF THE NEWCOMERS FROM THE NORTH-WEST AND THE WEST: THE SENGA

INTRODUCTION

Other than the intruders from the east, the Tumbuka were also invaded by foreign groups of people from the north-west and the west. From the north-west, six small groups of culturally related people entered the Tumbuka territory before 1800. These were the Tambo, the Wandya, the Lambya, the Nyika (also known as the Wenya), the Fungwe, and the Yombe, the largest of the seven small groups.[115] Other than the Yombe, the rest have had very insignificant impact on the Tumbuka. The important thing is that all these groups have over the centuries, either collectively or individually, adopted, accepted, or understood the language and known the culture of their demographically superior neighbours, the Tumbuka.[116] The degree of acceptance is naturally greater at the *frontier* than further from it. The Yombe are culturally a strong part of the Tumbuka.

---

[115] This is the group that Coxhead, cited in Brelsford's book, describes as 'descended from a common stock . . . in the Tumbuka cluster'. Brelsford, *The Tribes of Zambia*, chapter 14, especially page 90.

[116] See Map 15 for areas in the former Tumbuka Kingdom where Chi-Tumbuka is still an important language today.

The first ethnic group to encounter the Tumbuka from the west was the Bemba in 1760. The Bemba, moving eastward from the Luapula River, encountered the Tumbuka in the Muchinga ba Bemba Mountains or escarpment (the mountains or escarpment that prevented or blocked the Bemba from crossing or moving to the east), commonly known as Muchinga. The majority of the Bemba remained on the western side of the mountains and left the Tumbuka undisturbed on the eastern side. The mountains remained the main physical barriers between the Tumbuka and the Bemba.

THE ARRIVAL OF THE BIZA

Before 1720, the Bisa (the Tumbuka called them Biza, and in Chi-Tumbuka language, the term *biza* means 'they have come'), moving eastward from the Luapula River, settled and established themselves in the present Mpika District and south of the Muchinga ba Bemba Mountains (commonly known as Muchinga Escarpment). Later they extended eastward up to the west bank of the Luangwa River, where they came into contact with the Tumbuka, whose territory at the time extended westward up to the east bank of the Luangwa River.

A small segment of the Biza looking for land crossed the Luangwa River and, between 1780 and 1800, settled on the east bank among the autochthonous Tumbuka in the Luangwa Valley. By 1800 they had established themselves in the valley and, using treacherous methods, set up Biza chiefdoms among the indigenous people. Their pioneer leader was Chibeza, who established the first chiefdom, Kambombo. Thereafter, other Biza chiefdoms emerged either independently or as a result of succession disputes within the original Kambombo chiefdom. Gradually, the Biza completely conquered and settled among the already established Tumbuka. They went ahead and established several chiefdoms within an already existing larger chiefdom and started collecting tributes from the local people. Their political power covered the entire present Chama District except for the Balowoka chiefdom of Themba Katumbi Limilazamba, which was set up in the territory that is now part of Chama North, stretching between Chikontha and

Nchuka subchiefs to the west and east respectively. The Biza were the only people from the west who had remarkable impact on the native Tumbuka in the Luangwa Valley.

The story of the arrival of the Biza is very interesting indeed. Led by their leader, Chibesa (Chibeza), the Biza crossed Luangwa River and briefly stopped east of the river at a lagoon, a place later came to be known as Chibeza's or Kambombo's pool. Their first *main* stop was on the lower valley of the Kalinku Kayuni River (details of the origin of this name are explained in chapter 3). From there, they followed the Kalinku Kayuni River eastward up to the source, passing through the present Mpundu area. All this time, they did not meet any of the Tumbuka traditional authorities. They passed through Chidundu's territory and reached Mungwalala's territory. Chidundu and Mungwalala were both subordinates of Chief Chamanyavyose. The Biza followed the river up to the mountain, where they found another body of water. At that place, there was a big musangu tree on which there were many *masekwa* birds and masekwa nests. The body of water was later known as the pool of Masekwa, named after the birds they found on the musangu ([also known as *musangusangu*] tree. The hill in the vicinity was also named Masekwa hill. The Biza went on and came to another hill and another river. Both physical features were given one name: Chimilila (stopover). This is because they stopped and rested in this area. All the time, the Biza were looking for a good place in which to settle. [117]

[117] Information on the arrival of the Biza came from the following: Headman Kabanda (over sixty years old, Chama Boma, Chief Kambombo), who was interviewed on 28 June 1990; Zacharia Bota (eighty-two years old, Chama Village, Chief Kambombo), who was interviewed on 6 August 1998; and Robert Chilembo (fifty-seven years old, Mutunga Village, Chiyunga, Chief Kambombo), who was interviewed in 2001. The Tumbuka have another version of the name Senga. They say that the Biza were given the name Senga by the Tumbuka because they (the Biza) borrowed or asked for their land. Asking for something from someone is *ku senga* in the Chi-Tumbuka language. Thus, the name Senga became the name for the people who

After wandering for some time, the Chibeza group of the Biza suddenly came across a village. They went into the village and found a man sitting on a special high traditional stool. Under the stool, there were two men sitting, and facing the opposite directions. The Biza were very surprised indeed. When they came close to the man on the stool, they greeted him and asked him the meaning of what they saw. He responded and said, 'I am Kaleya Mungwalala Kazilondo, *mukhala pa bantu* [the one who sits on the people]. This is my leadership name and power.' That was the Biza's first encounter with the indigenous people in the valley.

The Biza group went back to their base at Chimilila and reported to the rest what they encountered. They reported that the land they were in was under Mungwalala, a subchief of a bigger chief they did not meet. For that reason, they moved away from Chimilila, the land that was also under the subking Mungwalala. They went southward to a very high mountain that the local Tumbuka called kavuba, the worshipping area. This was a hill where the people worshipped, and each time they worshipped, they got what they wanted from their god through their *intermediaries*, the ancestors' spirits. It was at that place, at the foot of the kavuba mountain, that the Biza had a meeting to decide whether or not to proceed, to remain there, or to go back to Chibesakunda.

They decided not to go any further; hence, that place became the Biza's terminus or furthest frontier. They said, 'Ta goma mu musenga uwu.' The backwoods is our terminus, we shall not go any further, we have stopped here.

The local people called these wandering people the *Senga* of the *Goma* clan. Initially, to the Tumbuka, the Biza people had no name. They did not know them very well. For this reason, the Tumbuka called them the *Senga*, 'people of the backwoods' (*ba mu musenga*). Their *clan* name, which later became the main *surname* of the ruling class of this group, was Goma, meaning 'the people that *stopped* [*goma*/*gota*] at the

---

came to Tumbuka land, asking for food and land to settle in. Each explanation of the *origin* of the name Senga is correct in its own way.

kavuba hill'. Goma also meant that these people were stopped from going east beyond the mountains by the kavuba hill. Their *new* name, *Senga* (from *musenga*, 'backwoods') became their *permanent* name and has remained like this up to today. This is how the Biza (Bisa) who entered Chamanyavyose's chiefdom became known as the Senga. The Senga renamed the kavuba hill. They called it *mpala ya mu musenga*, 'the royal courtyard in the backwoods'. That was in remembrance of the temporary settlement they set up in the backwoods. Later, the hill was called Mpalausenga, a short version or a corruption of mpala ya mu musenga.

When they left Mpalausenga hill, the Senga followed the Mpalausenga River downstream. At the foot of the hill, they went southward and crossed another river before sighting another village. Here, they found that the second village was bigger than the first one they saw earlier. In the village, they also saw a man on the throne. The throne was made of mubanga poles, and its upper segment was made of elephant tusks. The leopard's skins were put on top of the elephant tusks. Two men were also seated under the throne. The man in the throne was wearing a *black crown* spotted with a *leopard's skin* on his head and holding a stick in his hand; lion's skin was on top of the elephant tusks where he was seated.

Chibeza and his group came closer to the throne, knelt, and greeted the man on the throne.

The man just nodded as a sign of acknowledging their greeting. By custom, the man on the throne only talked to people through someone else—the prime minister, kazembe. At that time, the prime minister was temporarily not there. The Senga quickly commented that they had not met a man with such honour and respect in the area since they came in the valley. When the prime minister came on request from the Senga, he explained to them that the person on the throne was their chief, Chief Chamanyavyose Musolomoka ku chanya. Chamanyavyose means 'the one who knows everything', and Musolomoka ku chanya means 'the one who dropped from heaven'—in short, *Chama*.

The place where they had come was the headquarters (*musumba*) of the chiefdom. Before the group left to its place between Mpundu and the *present* Kambombo headquarters, they spotted a very beautiful young girl at the palace, Princess Mulolwa, daughter of the chief. The significance of this girl will be discussed later in the chapter. At their new place, the Senga were not happy after hearing what Chibeza encountered. They thought that Chief Chamanyavyose would come to tell them to leave his territory. To their surprise, days, weeks, and months passed, but Chief Chamanyavyose's soldiers (bavyaka) did not go there to chase them away. That was probably the worst mistake Chief Chamanyavyose ever made in his political life.

CHIBEZA KAMBOMBO AND THE DOWNFALL OF CHIEF CHAMANYAVYOSE

Chibeza made several social visits to Chief Chamanyavyose's headquarters. The trips cemented their relationship and made Chief Chamanyavyose allow the Senga to continue living where they were, at Kalinku. When Chief Chamanyavyose allowed the Senga to settle in his land, he did not show them a specific place where to settle. He also did not restrict them to a specific area in his large chiefdom. Thus, they could settle anywhere and could expand 'their territory' to any part of his chiefdom. That was another of Chamanyavyose's greatest weakness in his political career.

After some time, the Senga felt at home in Chief Chamanyavyose's territory. Now that they were settled and knew who the real chief of the territory was, they decided and planned to overthrow him. They planned several ways of carrying out the coup d'état, but the Senga elders approved none of them. Finally, they decided to use a simpler method: the use of the chief's daughter, Mulolwa, as *bait* against her father. Before Chibeza proposed to marry Mulolwa, he became very friendly to Chief Chamanyavyose. He paid tributes promptly and made frequent social visits to Chamanyavyose's palace. That was Chibeza's strategy to marry Chief Chamanyavyose's daughter. If

Chibeza did not do so, it was going to be very difficult to marry Chief Chamanyavyose's daughter. He was an alien, and by custom, it was not easily allowed or accepted by the elders in the clan. They did not want strangers to marry their daughters, let alone a princess.

Eventually, Chibeza was allowed to marry the princess. That was Chamanyavyose's third catastrophic mistake and also an important factor that contributed to his political downfall. Chibeza came with his first wife from Biza land, given to him by a Biza chief, Chief Kopa, in the *present* Mpika District.[118] However, that woman was barren, hence the reason to marry another woman to bear him children. After some time, Mulolwa gave birth to a son. Chibeza did not name his son. It was in fact an honour for Chief Chamanyavyose, the grandfather, to name the son. Indeed, Chief Chamanyavyose named his grandson *Kasolokela mwa Senga*, which means 'it is [he is] alone among the Senga'. What it really meant was that his daughter was all by herself among the Senga. Later, the name was shortened to Kasolwe.

In the second year, the child was big and was able to walk on his own unaided. According to Chibeza, that was the convenient time for him to implement his plan to overthrow Chief Chamanyavyose, his father-in-law. First, Chibeza created a lie that Kasolwe was sick and that he wanted Chief Chamanyavyose, the maternal grandfather, to go to Kalinku immediately and pray for the child to get better. A messenger was sent to deliver the message to Chief Chamanyavyose, twenty kilometres south of Kalinku.

The chief's response was that the sick child should be brought to the palace for treatment. The chief would not travel to Chibeza's village. This message was delivered to Chibeza, who was not satisfied with it. Instead, he again sent another urgent message asking the chief to go and see the 'sick' Kasolwe. But Chamanyavyose explained to the messenger why he could not travel and insisted that the child

---

[118] Some books or oral traditions mention the woman given to Chibeza by Chief Kopa as Mwali. This was not her name. *Mwali* is a Tumbuka term to describe a marriageable woman as opposed to *butu*, a woman who is 'big' but has not yet reached puberty.

be brought to the chief's palace. After all, the family kavuba was at Kamphemba Village (Chamanyavyose's headquarters) and not at the village of Chibeza. He queried the wisdom of going to speak to the ancestors' spirits at Kalinku, where there was no kavuba of Chamanyavyose's family.

The final message from Chibeza was that the child could not move or be taken over a long distance because he was very sick. The chief was to go to Kalinku at once. On hearing that, Chief Chamanyavyose immediately started off on his trip 'alone' to Chibeza's village unofficially. He did not inform his senior subchief, Mungwalala, or any other subchief in the chiefdom. That was another grave political blunder Chamanyavyose made. He only allowed two people to accompany him. These were the ones that carried the bow and arrows, harps, and other items. Together, only three people went to Kalinku. Chamanyavyose himself was carrying kapopo, a chiefly ritual axe on his shoulder, and a walking stick to support him as he walked.

Chibeza met his guests, Chamanyavyose and his two retainers, in his village. Chief Chamanyavyose was given a chair equivalent to his own throne at his palace. The only difference was that it was built inside the house. Many people came to greet the chief by kneeling, clapping, and saying, 'Tili pasi kuno fumu.' We are down here, Chief. We are not above you, Chief. The response from Chamanyavyose was 'Yewo.' Yes, thank you.

What surprised Chamanyavyose was that he found Kasolwe quite healthy and playing with other children. When he asked about it, the answer from Chibeza was that the boy became fine on his (Chamanyavyose's) arrival. Chibeza said that the spirits of the chief's clan treated the boy because they knew that the chief was arriving in the village to see the child. That was why the chief found the child not sick. Chibeza's people reiterated what their *leader* said by stating that they also noticed his good health a few moments before the chief arrived. Chamanyavyose was given the child to bless him there *and then*, but he refused and said that he was taking the child to Kamphemba (a Senga corruption of the original name, Kapemba) at the family kavuba.

The Senga replied by accusing Chamanyavyose of practising witchcraft and that if he refused to bless the child, it meant that he was the one bewitching his own grandchild. They also threatened him by saying that if he refused, he would go back to his palace a dead person. When the chief tried to resist physically, they held him and put him on his back on the floor and stretched him flat while everybody stood and watched, including the small Kasolwe. In the Tumbuka tradition, a leader, especially a chief, should not lay flat on the ground or floor, particularly on his back, while the subjects are standing. Such an action is a sign of paying homage to someone standing. This is *kulamba* or *kulambila* in Chi-Tumbuka language. If such a thing happens, it means that the one who is standing is now the leader or chief. At that moment, all the people shouted, 'Chamanyavyose alambila mwana Kasolwe.' Chief Chamanyavyose has laid flat on his back on the floor to Kasolwe. It meant that Chief Chamanyavyose had paid *homage* to Kasolwe. Chief Chamanyavyose Musolomoka clearly knew what that meant in the tradition of the Tumbuka and what it also meant from that moment onwards. His status had immediately changed; he was no longer a chief of the Tumbuka in his chiefdom.

After the incident, the Senga told Chief Chamanyavyose that from that day onwards, he was no longer a chief. Kasolwe was now the *new* chief. They told him that from that time, if he killed an elephant, the ground tusk (*la chalo*) would be brought to the grandson. They also said that the chief's regalia (*attire of authority or symbol of office*) was to be brought to Kasolwe, the new chief. However, our informants made it clear that the *handover* of the chiefly regalia from Chamanyavyose to Kasolwe, including the official handover ceremony, was *never* done. Worse still, nobody from Chibeza's group realised or remembered that Chief Chamanyavyose's regalia was not given to Kasolwe. The situation has remained like this to this day.

Therefore, what that meant and still means is that technically the chieftaincy was not (*all*) completely transferred from Chief Chamanyavyose to Chibeza Kambombo. However, from that time and without the chief's regalia, Chibeza began praising himself thus: 'Ine Goma mumapili nkayegha mbuto mu muskambo kufuma ku Uluba.'

I came from the Luba Kingdom, carrying seeds secretly and stopped here in the hills.

What he meant was that he came from Luba Kingdom not as a chief, but now he has become one. He was, from that moment, the new chief of the Tumbuka in Chamanyavyose's chiefdom.

The thing to remember is that it is a historical fact that traditionally the Tumbuka are a matrilineal society. However, as noted earlier and for the reasons given, the Tumbuka were and still are an ethnic group that practises matrilineal ascendancy to political power. Only when it is necessary and beyond their control and in very rare circumstances do they practise ascendancy to political power patrilineally. Thus, matrilineally, Kasolwe, the grandson of Chamanyavyose, was—although with a remote chance—one of the many rightful heirs to take over the Chamanyavyose chieftainship at a later date. However, the way it was done was not correct traditionally. It was done at a wrong time and in a wrong way. What happened was a form of *coup d'état*, or a *diplomilitary* take over.

The other point to explain is that *Kasolwe* Chibeza Goma was a Biza–Senga, not a pure Tumbuka. In the near future, he was to become the chief of the Senga, not the chief of the Tumbuka. Like the Tumbuka, the Senga were also a matrilineal society. However, many of them entered the Tumbuka territory without women or their wives. So they had to marry the local women. For this reason, for them to religiously follow their custom of the nephew taking over as chief after the death of a chief was at this time not possible. They had to wait for maybe two generations for their children to have their children, among which would be daughters whose children (mainly sons) would be chosen as chiefs. As a strategy, they applied the patrilineal system of succession of political power. The sons or brothers began taking over as chiefs after the deaths of the chiefs. That system has remained to this day, contrary to the custom of their ancestors, the Luba and the Bisa. However, this change from matrilineal to patrilineal, with chieftaincy running from father to brother and to the son, was followed by the Chibeza Goma clan only. The *other* Senga or Biza continued with their original tradition of matrilineal ascendancy to political power up to this day.

The Balowoka from central Tanzania entering the Tumbuka Kingdom from east of Lake Malawi did the same to the Tumbuka people; they usurped their political power at almost the same time as the Senga were usurping the Tumbuka political power from the western end of the kingdom between 1770 and 1795. As expected, in both circumstances, the Tumbuka never changed in favour of one of the two systems. They continued as they had been when they created their kingdom, practising matrilineal system and, where necessary, 'changing' to patrilineal system. The same was true for all the Tumbuka chiefs who were thereafter relegated to ordinary subchiefs; they followed *both systems*, depending on the prevailing circumstances. The brother or the son was allowed to become the new chief on the death of a chief. The nephews became chiefs only in very special circumstances. In this case, the tradition allowed *only the son* of the incumbent *chief's sister* to take over chieftainship on his death.

Probably due to the unusual situation the Senga faced, after the death of Chibeza, there emerged serious succession disputes, and they left a big wound in the Kambombo Senga's unity. Some Senga elders were not happy with Kasolwe as the new Kambombo. This led to a split. One of the breakaway groups was led by Kamphata, a very close companion of Chibeza. The group left Kambombo in about 1805 and formed its own chiefdom, Tembwe, south of Kambombo. Its headquarters was Mkoka, which was on the stream by the same name.

South of the Tembwe chiefdom was Chikwa, another Senga chiefdom under the Ng'uni clan. The Chikwa group was in the same original Chibeza Kambombo group from Luba Kingdom, but they split from the main group at Chibesakunda, in Bisaland, on the west bank of Luangwa River. From Chibesakunda, the Chibeza Kambombo group went straight eastward and crossed Luangwa River. However, the Chikwa group left Chibesakunda and crossed the Luangwa River from the south-western direction. This group was under Chimwerampande and Mpiana Chawala (Chabala), the brothers by the same mother, Ngosa Kamunga. After meandering in the Luangwa Valley, the group finally settled south of the Tembwe

chiefdom, in the Tumbuka territory under the headman Mpamvi in the area extending from Lunzi to Lumezi Rivers. This was in about 1810.

Chifunda is the southernmost Senga chiefdom in the whole Senga land in Luangwa Valley. The Chifunda segment of the Senga also broke off from the main Chibeza Kambombo group at Chief Mukungule, south of Chibesakunda. The group went south from Mukungule under the leadership of Mwinemitondo of the Lungu clan. The Chifunda group crossed Luangwa at a point near Lukuzye (Rukuzi) River sometime before 1840. From there, the group moved in a south-eastern direction and settled in the territory of Chief Chinunda, a Chewa. Later, they moved away from Chinunda's territory and settled in the Lumezi–Lundazi basin, also known as Nyimbwe, south of Lumezi River. This was also the land of the Tumbuka.

FROM CHAMANYAVYOSE TO CHAMANYAVYOSE MUTAYACHALO

After he was stripped of his political power by Chibeza, 'Chief' Chamanyavyose and his two assistants left Kalinku and headed straight to his subchief Mungwalala. There, he narrated the story, and Mungwalala blamed Chamanyavyose for not telling him in advance about the trip he made to Chibeza's village. It was all Chamanyavyose's fault that the chiefdom was now lost to the Senga. In conclusion, Mungwalala told Chamanyavyose, 'Mwatayachalo.' You have lost the chiefdom/land/territory to the Senga. Shortly thereafter, the Tumbuka people in Chamanyavyose's chiefdom heard what had happened, and they were very sad and angry with their chief. Quickly, Chamanyavyose informed M'nyanjagha and the subchiefs in the kingdom, such as Chiyunga, Kapemba, Mgwela, Jalila, Katongomala, and Chiti. The other chiefs felt very sorry for him. They also realised that what had happened to Chamanyavyose was likely to happen to them because of the intruders entering their chiefdoms. But they did nothing to intervene in the problems that Chamanyavyose faced.

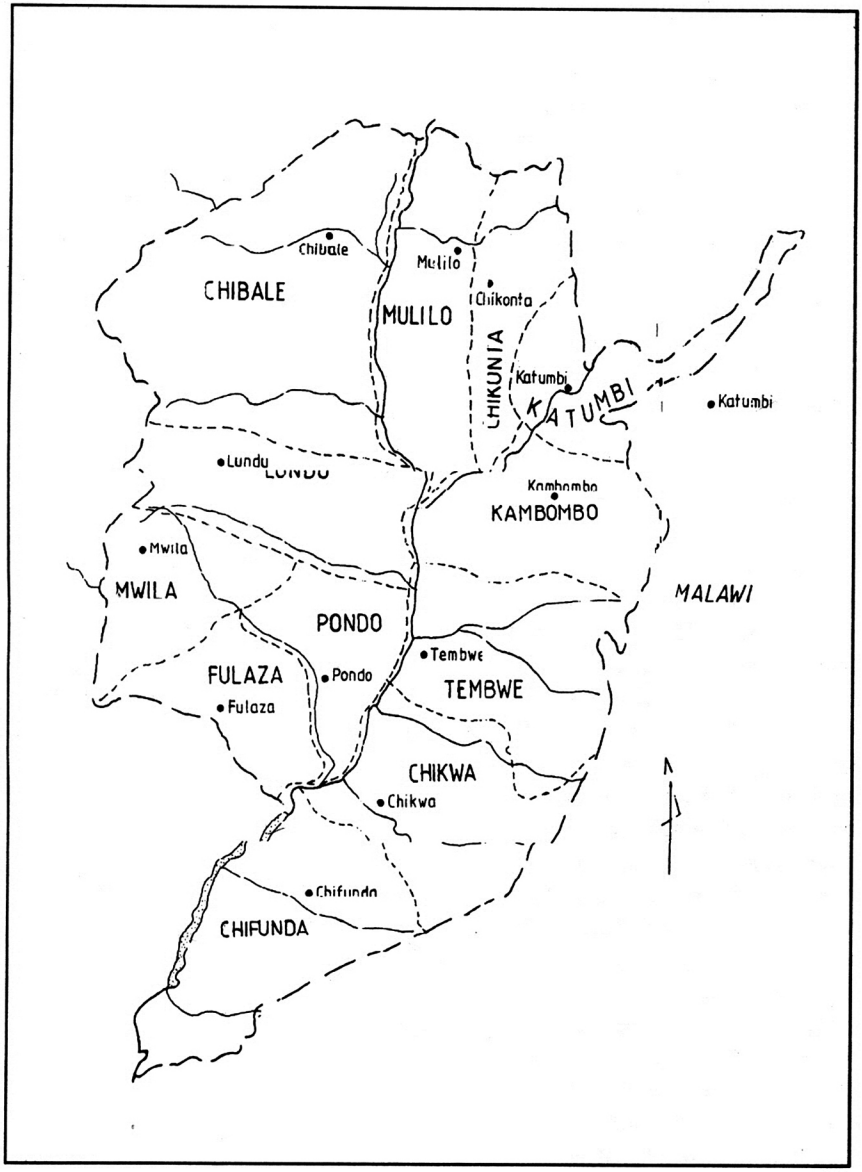
On arrival, Chamanyavyose found a number of his subjects gathered and weeping at his palace. They were crying the loss of their country by their own chief. After mourning with his people, he later explained the circumstances that led to the loss of his chieftainship. That was how the Tumbuka in the present Chama (Chamanyavyose) District lost their chieftainship to the Senga. The British government elevated Kambombo's position to *senior* chief in 1937.[119] The Tumbuka in Chama District honour and respect the senior chief Kambombo as their chief. It was neither the present Chamanyavyose nor the present Kambombo who made the original mistake. The Senga chief was cleverer than the Tumbuka chief who took the Senga for granted and sincerely trusted them. There is a saying in Tumbuka land: 'Ngulube yikulya mweneko munda.' The wild pig kills the owner of the field where it grazes.

After some time, Chamanyavyose Musolomoka gave himself a new name to commemorate what had happened. He called himself Mutayachalo (the one who has lost the chieftaincy or the land). He built his own village by that name. The village still stands today in the east of Chama Boma after the Chama Basic School football field. The village is between Chizgobi (now known as Chizowe), his brother's village, and Chamanyavyose's original village (Kamphemba) on the north bank of Kamphemba River. Chamanyavyose left the original village under his firstborn child, Zgala (play). The Senga comforted Zgala by giving him the name Kanabesa. In Chi-Bisa language, *kanabesa* means 'the respected one'. He was to be the respected one because the Senga chief promised him that henceforth the death of

[119] For more information on how Chief Kambombo was imposed as senior chief of the Senga–Tumbuka people, read NAZ/SEC 2/320 Amalgamation of the Senga Tribe. More details on the arrival of the Biza/Senga into Chamanyavyose's territory from: P. M. Mukuka, National Archives of Zambia, Calendars of the District Notebooks (Northern Province 1862–1963), vol. 2 (Lusaka: Government Printer, 1966), *passim*, and Yizenge Chondoka, *History of the Tumbuka and Senga in Chama District, 1470 to 1900: Chiefdoms without a Kingdom* (Lusaka: Academic Press, 2007).

a Kambombo would first be announced to him. The Tumbuka mispronounced the name Kanabesa, and it became Kanabeza. The name has remained to this day as the name for Zgala, and sometimes Chamanyavyose's village is also called Kanabeza. The name Zgala has disappeared completely. Kanabeza took over leadership from his father 'Chief' Chamanyavyose Fwasani Musolomoka Mutayachalo. He was the third Chamanyavyose. He began crowning the subsequent Mutayachalo headmen.

Chibeza and Mulolwa had another son whom the Senga named Wengo. The Tumbuka did not know the meaning of the name Wengo—'sesame plant' or 'sesame seeds'. Another child, a daughter, was born and named by the maternal grandparents. Mutayachalo (Chamanyavyose Musolomoka) named the child as Utesi (a lie). Mutayachalo named the granddaughter Utesi as a way of registering his protest to what had happened to him and the Tumbuka people in Luangwa Valley. The name was a clear testimony of how the Senga cheated him and got his chieftainship. It was also to show the Senga how the Tumbuka really felt after being tricked into a situation where they lost their territory to the invaders. Mutayachalo created another village and gave it to his grandson, Kanabeza's child. His name was Zelu Zamala, meaning 'I, Chamanyavyose, have no more wisdom'. The name of the village has always been Zelu (wisdom), a short version of Zelu Zamala. As noted above, the first Zelu was the son of Kanabeza and was a village headman. The second Zelu was a nephew of the first Zelu. This one eventually became the seventh Chamanyavyose.

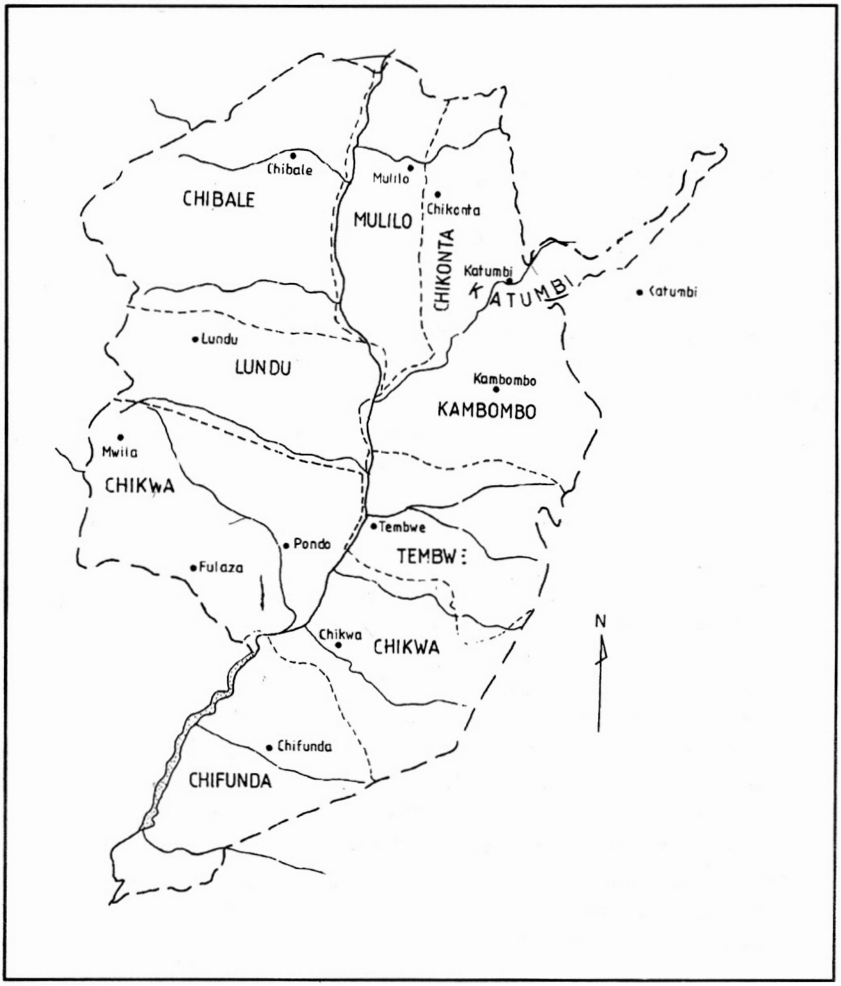


Map 11. Senga Chiefdoms by 1938

THE TUMBUKA UNDER THE SENGA CHIEFS

The Senga entered the Tumbuka territory in small family groups. We are told that the Senga were very shrewd and treacherous and are remembered for not being sincere in their dealings with the local traditional authorities. After staying among the local people for a long time, they married the local women. That was one way of assimilating the local culture and understanding the people better. After some time, they usurped political power from the Tumbuka chief by unconventional diplomilitary methods. Initially, a few Tumbuka headmen accepted the Senga's political power, but gradually the Senga were able to exercise their power over almost the entire Tumbuka people in the Luangwa Valley. It was only the small portion in the north under the Mlowoka leader, Themba Katumbi Limilazamba, that remained outside the Senga's political power. Although theoretically, the area was under Themba Mulindawafwa Katumbi in Hebe (Hewe) District in northern province in Nyasaland (Malawi), in practice, it was Chibeza or his successors who had more political power over the Tumbuka in that part of Chamanyavyose's chiefdom, especially in 1964.

Like the Balowoka, the Senga ruled the Tumbuka through a system of indirect rule. That was a system whereby the Senga ruled the Tumbuka through the existing traditional native political structures. Wherever they ruled, the Senga left the Tumbuka local traditional authorities to rule over their own people according to their custom and creed. Thus, the grass-roots rulers at village level or, in some rare cases, at subchief level within the chiefdom were the indigenous people. The appointing authorities were the local people themselves. However, as a way of respecting the new chief that had taken over the Tumbuka territory, the appointed local leaders had to be approved by the Senga chief. The Senga rarely rejected such appointments made by the Tumbuka rulers. This system of rule made it difficult for the Senga to change the Tumbuka way of life. From this point of view, the Senga had little effect on the Tumbuka way of living.



Map 12. Current Senga Chiefdoms created after 1945

IMPACT OF THE SENGA ON THE TUMBUKA

The Senga entered the Tumbuka territory in the Luangwa Valley almost at the same time the Balowoka were entering Nkhamanga region in Northern Malawi. Traditions speak of the Senga coming to this land without women. For this reason, when they settled down, they married the local women. Their children got the language of their mothers, Tumbuka. This situation made the Senga lose much of their original language, Bisa. This explains why today the Tumbuka spoken in Chama District contains between 15 per cent to 20 per cent Biza and 80 per cent Tumbuka. So in reality, the Senga have lost their language. The language that they speak is Tumbuka. There is more Bisa in Tumbuka as one goes west of the district and less of it as one goes east of the district, particularly east of Luangwa River. The opposite is true for the Tumbuka language. For example, *nyimbwa* (dog) is Senga, and *nchebe* is Tumbuka. *Nakulu* (grandmother) is Senga, and *gogo* is Tumbuka. *Shikulu* (grandfather) is Senga, and *sekulu* is Tumbuka. These are few Bisa words to remind the Senga that they are historically an offshoot of the Bisa. They also speak faster than the Tumbuka, and their accent is sharper, closer to Chi-Bisa than to Chi-Tumbuka.

When the Senga bury the dead in the grave, the tradition is for the dead person's head to point to the west and the legs to the east. This is a historical reminder that they came from the west and settled in the east. For the Tumbuka, the situation is a complete reversal of the Senga. In the grave, the dead person's body *faces* to the north, the *head* points to the east, and the *legs* to the west. This is also a reminder for the Tumbuka that they came from the north but entered the Luangwa Valley (or the M'nyanjagha Kingdom) from the east.

For strategic reasons, after some time, the Senga abandoned their matrilineal system of inheritance to political power and started the patrilineal system of succession of political power. The Senga patrilineal system is from brother to brother, brother to son, or father to son. The Senga subdued the centralised Tumbuka and established chiefs among them. They established a centralised Senga *states* or

chiefdoms that began to collect tributes from the Tumbuka 'chiefs' in their respective areas. Beginning with the initial state, Kambombo, under Chibeza, other chiefdoms or *states* were created that covered much of the present Chama District.

The following were the main Senga chiefdoms: Mulilo and Chibale to the northwest; Kambombo in the centre; Tembwe, Chikwa, and Chifunda in the south; and Lundu to the west. Themba Katumbi Limilazamba's chiefdom (commonly called Katumbi or west Katumbi), which included territories previously under Chamanyavyose's subchiefs Chikontha and Nchuka under Themba Kapungu of the famous Mlowoka Chabinga aristocracy, was sandwiched between the chiefdoms of Mulilo and Kambombo. However, after the Second European War, Katumbi Limilazamba's chiefdom, a 'subsidiary chiefdom' of his brother Themba Mulindawafwa Katumbi in Hebe, north-western Malawi, was strategically abolished by the colonial government. Thereafter, it became part of Kambombo's chiefdom and has remained like that to this day.

Why did the Tumbuka in the kingdom not organise a military campaign against the Senga after they dethroned Chief Chamanyavyose? We shall never know the real reasons. However, field research revealed a number of possibilities. It could be that they were not ready for a war because they did not have adequate resources to fight a war. It could also be that by the end of the eighteenth century, the Balowoka had already weakened the M'nyanjagha, who by tradition should have sanctioned a war and organised a military campaign to flush out the Senga from Chamanyavyose's chiefdom. It could also mean that the Tumbuka were too slow to react, and when they wanted to do so, it was too late; they were facing more than one enemy and from different directions. Also, if they did not react militarily to the political interference of the Balowoka in Nkhamanga, why should they do so now that the Senga were interfering in Chamanyavyose's chiefdom? That was also the period of the disintegration and eventual downfall of the M'nyanjagha and his kingdom.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

ARRIVAL OF THE NEWCOMERS FROM THE SOUTH: THE NGONI

INTRODUCTION

Like many Nguni-speaking peoples of the present Natal province of South Africa, the Ngoni of the Jere clan under their leader and army commander, Zwangendaba Jere, left the Zulu Kingdom during the Shaka-initiated Mfecane. This Ngoni group went north and reached Zambezi River in 1835. From about fourteen hours on 19 November in 1835, there was an eclipse of the sun, the phenomenon that surprised the Ngoni as they began crossing Zambezi River. The eclipse of the sun has remained a permanent feature in the oral tradions of the Ngoni. They crossed the Zambezi River from the Zimbabwean side to Zumbo (or Zumbu), a confluence settlement (Zambezi and Luangwa Rivers) on the *north bank* of Zambezi River in Mozambique but east of Luangwa (Feira), also a confluence settlement in Zambia (Luangwa and Zambezi Rivers). Besides being on the north bank of Zambezi River, Zumbo is also on the *east bank of Luangwa River* at the confluence with Zambezi River. It took a few days for all to cross. They crossed and landed on the east bank and north bank of the rivers Luangwa and Zambezi respectively in an area under the Nsenga headman Kanyimbwa. This was in the territory of Chief Mguduza. The Ngoni continued trekking north of Zumbo in

Mguduza's territory until they reached the present Petauke in an area under Chief Mkoko. Here, they stayed for about four years. Some children were born in the first house of Zwangendaba, and others were not. This created succession problems years later at Mapupo when Zwangendaba died. Some of his children were Mhlachana, Ndabazake, Mtwaro (also known as Mtwandhlana, the 'little burden'), and Magwegwe.

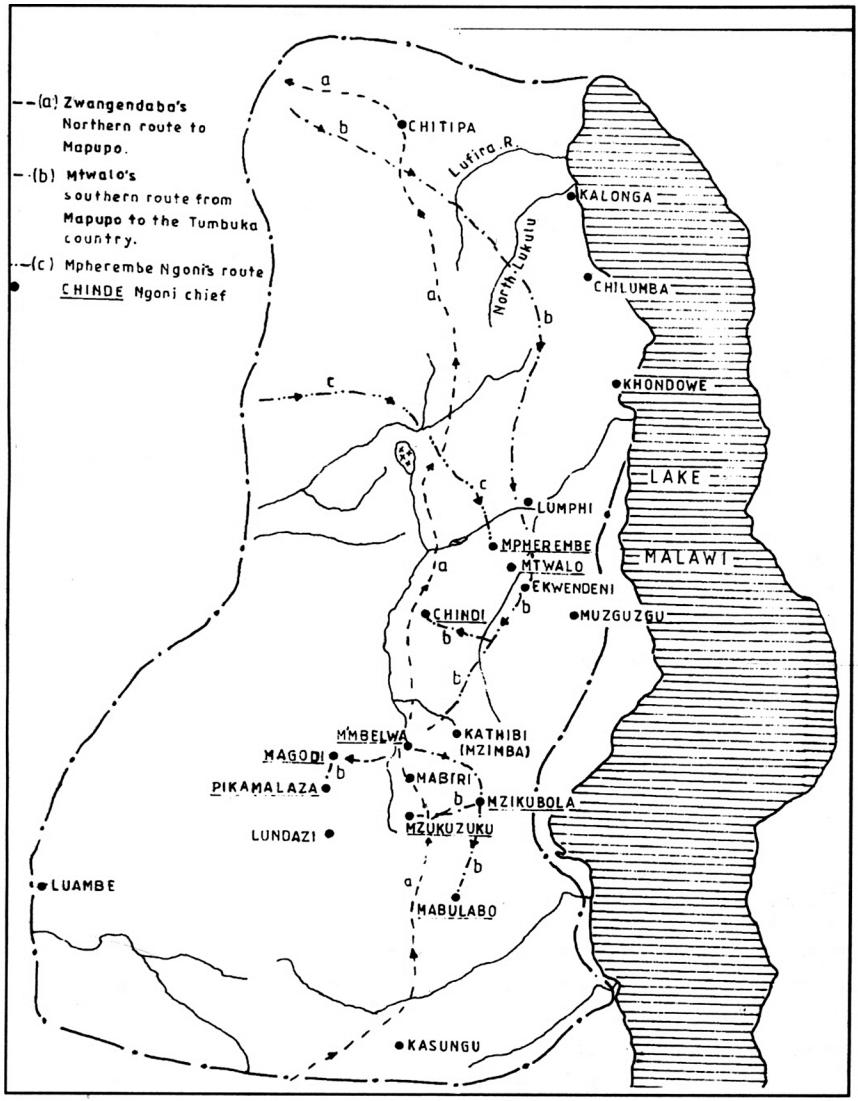
While in Petauke, the Ngoni raided the neighbouring and distant areas and got many Nsenga and Chewa people as captives. In fact, many of the Nsenga young men were *incorporated* into the Ngoni regiments.

From Petauke, the Ngoni took an eastern route up to Mwase Kasungu, in the heart of the Chewa territory in the present Central Malawi. From there, they went north and settled at the Rukuru River–created lakelets of Mawiri for four years. Mawiri is south of the present town of Loudon Mission Station in Malawi. At that time, the area was under a Chewa headman or subchief, Chulu, in Mwase Kasungu's kingdom. Like in the Nsenga land, the Ngoni raided the surrounding areas and took many Chewa and Tumbuka people as captives. Many of them were incorporated in the army. It is here where Munene, wife of Zwangendaba, gave birth to a son, Mhlahlo. He was born after a regiment had gone north on a raiding mission in Nkonde territory, where they captured the cattle of a Nkonde man named Mwambera. For this reason, Mhlahlo was also given the name Mwambera. The name Mwambera became more popular than Mhlahlo, and its spelling changed several times: from Mwambera to Mombera, Mbelwa, and finally, M'mbelwa. These are Ngoni versions of the same name. Zwangendaba's other children born here were Maurau (Mabulabo) and Mperembe (or Mperembi), who years later, when the Ngoni encountered the Bemba, was given the nickname Mwamba by the Bemba.

From Mawiri, the Ngoni impis (soldiers) raided many near and distant places for food, men, women, and cattle. For instance, a regiment under Ponceya went as far as Lake Tanganyika in the Fipa territory, where they brought samples of the famous *red cattle*. When

the ailing Zwangendaba saw them, he insisted to lead his people to the land of the red cattle in spite of his poor health. Leaving Mawiri, the Ngoni went north, passing through where Chindi (Chinde) Jere is today and continued to where Mperembe is today close to Lake Kazuni. From Lake Kazuni, they went west, then north, passing through Luwewe, Hebe (Hewe), and Muromboji (Murombozi). They continued north, passing through Uyombe (Muyombe) and Nthaliri (Nthalire) until they reached Kapinga hill, the source of the Luangwa River. They settled there for a while. Raiding parties reached as far as Tukuyu and Kabango areas in southern Tanzania.[120]

[120] Among the informants who provided data on the Ngoni was Patson Nthara (sixty-seven years old, Simon Kaluka Village, Chief Mperembe), who was interviewed on 11 December 1998. S. Kaluka is the great-grandfather of M'nyanjagha Kaluka.



Map 13. The arrival of the Ngoni in the Tumbuka Kingdom

From Kapinga, the Ngoni entered the territory where the present Mwenzo is. They went further north and settled at a place they later called Mapupo, meaning 'dreams'. That was their dreamland, the land of the *red cattle.* It is important to note that originally the Ngoni planned to settle at Luwanda, their *original* dreamland (Mapupo). However, the Ngoni never reached Luwanda because of their superstitions. As they were going there, Zwangendaba fell off the ox carrying him. To the Ngoni, that was a bad omen, and Zwangendaba was advised by his medicine men *not to proceed*, hence the decision to settle at a place *before* Luwanda, the first dream place, where the incident of the bad omen took place. The Ngoni did not name the place where they settled *before* Luwanda. If they did, then we do not know it. However, the Ngoni *declared* that place as their new Mapupo, their new dream place. Zwangendaba died at *this second* Mapupo after a few months of their stay there, in about 1848. This is where Zwangendaba was buried. His grave is still seen by the local people. It is in Zambia on the road between Nakonde and Mbala. For more details, see Map 7.

After Zwangendaba's death, there were serious secession and succession disputes that led to small but fierce battles among various Ngoni family divisions. Their first split was at the *second* Mapupo. Many left this place and came to settle at Malindika, a place near the present-day Fife. After a while, they also left Malindika and settled at Kabango. Later, they went back to Malindika before going to Makukwe near Tukuyu in southern Tanzania. It was here where Gwaza Jere, Zwangendaba's senior induna (advisor), diplomatically installed Ntuto, commonly known as Mpezeni, as chief of his segment. That was before 1855. From Makukwe, the Ngoni moved to Luwanda, the *original* (the first) but previously *unreached* dream place. It was at Luwanda where Chief Mpezeni assumed the *head ring*; hence, the place was named Chidhlodhlo (head ring) in memory of the important event. After that event, there were more secession and succession disputes among the already split Ngoni chieftaincies. However, this chapter emphasises only on the groups that came to settle among the Tumbuka, the focus of this book.

When Mpezeni arrived at Chidhlodhlo (or Luwanda) from Makukwe, he found the Mombera–Mtwaro group already there. Mpezeni's arrival seriously worried Gwaza Jere. He knew that there was going to be trouble between Mpezeni's group on one side and Mombera and Mtwaro's group on the other. To avoid this, Gwaza Jere quickly led Mombera and Mtwaro [or Mtwalo] south-eastward into the Tumbuka territory, while Mpezeni and his young brother Mperembe went westward into the Bemba territory, where they fought several battles with them. It was during these battles with the Bemba that Mperembe earned himself a Bemba name, Mwamba. However, after many years of fighting with the Bemba, Mperembe decided to break off from his brother's group. With his supporters, he went eastward, passing through Chinsali and the present Chama North up to Nkhamanga in Northern Malawi, where he found and joined the Mtwaro group that had already settled at Duru near Luhomelo hill.[121] Later, the Mombera–Mtwaro segment moved to Matako, Nyika Plateau, Henga Valley, and finally to Ng'onga near South Rukuru River.

It was at Ng'onga in about 1855 that Gwaza Jere, in another diplomatic move and as a way of promoting permanent peace in Mombera's group, made Mtwaro openly but tactfully decline the chieftainship and promptly offered it to Mombera. After that, Mtwaro became the main subordinate chief to Mombera and remained at Ekwendeni in the north, while in the south at Mzimba, was the paramount chief of the Ngoni in Northern Malawi, *inkosi ya makosi*, king of kings, Mombera. The two lived in peace. Since the Henga Valley was not suitable for cattle grazing, some members of the group went on and temporarily settled east of Choma Mountain in 1861. Others settled between Lunyangwa and Kafurufuru rivers. It is here near Ekwendeni where Munene, Mombera's mother, died. This Ngoni group finally settled in the valleys of the Lukonkobe, the Lunyangwa, the Kasitu, and the Kafurufuru rivers.

---

[121] Rev. Yesaya Mlonyeni Chibambo, *My Ngoni of Nyasaland* (London: United Society for Christian Literature, n.d. (1932)), translated by Rev. Charles Stuart, p. 36. For unknown reasons, the Tumbuka country was called Uswesi by the Ngoni in northern Nyasaland.

By the 1870s, Mombera's group, as we may now call it, had easily and comfortably settled in the east of M'nyanjagha Kingdom among the indigenous Tumbuka who gave little or no resistance at all to the Ngoni invasion of their vast kingdom. They confined themselves to the areas south of Lake Kazuni, east of South Lukulu River, north of Dwangwa River, and west of the Nkhata Bay or Lakeshore Tonga people. For details of the areas where the Ngoni settled, study Map 10. When Mperembe joined Mtwaro after leaving his brother Mpezeni fighting battles with the Bemba, and he became subordinate chief to Mtwaro in the north. They also lived in harmony. The three chiefs did not live long. Mtwaro died in 1890, Mombera in 1891, and Mperembe in 1909. Mtwalo and Mombera appointed a number of their senior indunas to the positions of subchiefs in order to administer the conquered Tumbuka people. One such induna was Tengayumo Ndhlovu, who was sent by Mombera to administer the conquered Tumbuka to the south-west of the Ngoni. He became the first Chief Magodi in the territory north of Lunzi River in the present Lundazi District.[122] The other induna was Pikamalaza, who set up his chiefdom south of Magodi. The local Tumbuka chief in the area where Chief Magodi, Tengayumo Ndhlovu, settled was Longwe. Other local chiefs were Kholopete Zimba, south of Chief Longwe; Malandula Nyirenda, south of Chasefu; Ndolo Musangula in the present Pikamalaza's (Ngoni) chiefdom; and Gumba and Mphamba Nyirenda, south of the present Lundazi town. All these chiefs had their subchiefs.

However, with the arrival of the Ngoni chiefs Magodi and Pikamalaza, Chief Mphamba was reduced to a mere subchief of Chief Magodi. All the other Tumbuka chiefs in the area were reduced to the positions of headmen either under Mphamba himself or under the Ngoni chiefs. When he set up the chiefdom, Magodi had only twelve Ngoni headmen in his newly created chiefdom. The rest of the headmen were Tumbuka. In the Tumbuka territory that was later known as Lundazi

---

[122] Magodi chieftaincy: first Magodi was Tengayumo Ndhlovu; second Magodi was Chipwafu Ndhlovu, third Magodi was Chipwante Ndhlovu, fourth Magodi was Chibavi Patson Ndhlovu (brother of Chipwante), fifth Magodi was Alfred Ndhlovu (son of Chibavi), six . . .

District, it was only Chief Mphamba, among many other Tumbuka chiefs, who fortunately retained the position of *chief*. At the turn of the century, Chief Magodi's position was erroneously upheld as *chief* of the *Tumbuka* people by the British South Africa Company (BSAC) officials. When the country came under direct administration of the British government, Magodi was *again* erroneously made senior chief of the Tumbuka. Altogether, at the turn of the twentieth century, there were *three chiefs* in the Tumbuka territory on the Zambian (Northern Rhodesia) side. These were Mphamba, the only *surviving Tumbuka chieftaincy* in the south; Magodi, a *Ngoni*; and Pikamalaza, another *Ngoni* (both of them north of Chief Mphamba's territory). In Malawi, other subordinate Ngoni chiefs included Mtwalo and Mperembe, north of Mzimba; Mabulabo, south of new Hoho; Mzukuzuku, south-west of Loudon; Mzikubola, north-east of Mzukuzuku (Loudon included), and Chindi, north-west of Hora mountains. Non-Ngoni chiefs included Muyombe and Katumbi (Balowoka by origin), north-west of Nkhamanga; Mwalweni (a Mlowoka by origin); Mwahenga, the only surviving Tumbuka chief in the north, east of Nyika Plateau in the Henga Valley; and Chikhulamayembe (a Mlowoka by origin) in Nkhamanga, south of Nyika Plateau.[123]

Tumbuka surviving subchiefs include Munthali in Mtwalo's chiefdom; Zolokele in Katumbi's chiefdom; Chikontha in Kambombo's chiefdom; the subchiefs and chiefs in Kalonga District, historically originating from the Mulonga Mbulalubilo Tumbuka clan; the subchiefs and chiefs in Chitipa District, most of them from the Kalonga wa Nkhonde Tumbuka group.

---

[123] The government of Bakili Muluzi in Malawi appointed a Mr Munthali as a full Tumbuka chief. His chiefdom is near Lumphi, a territory that was previously part of the larger Mtwaro's chiefdom. This is the *first full* Tumbuka chief in Malawi since the end of the M'nyanjagha era. Thus, now there are only two full Tumbuka chiefs in the former M'nyanjagha Kingdom: chiefs Mphamba and Munthali.

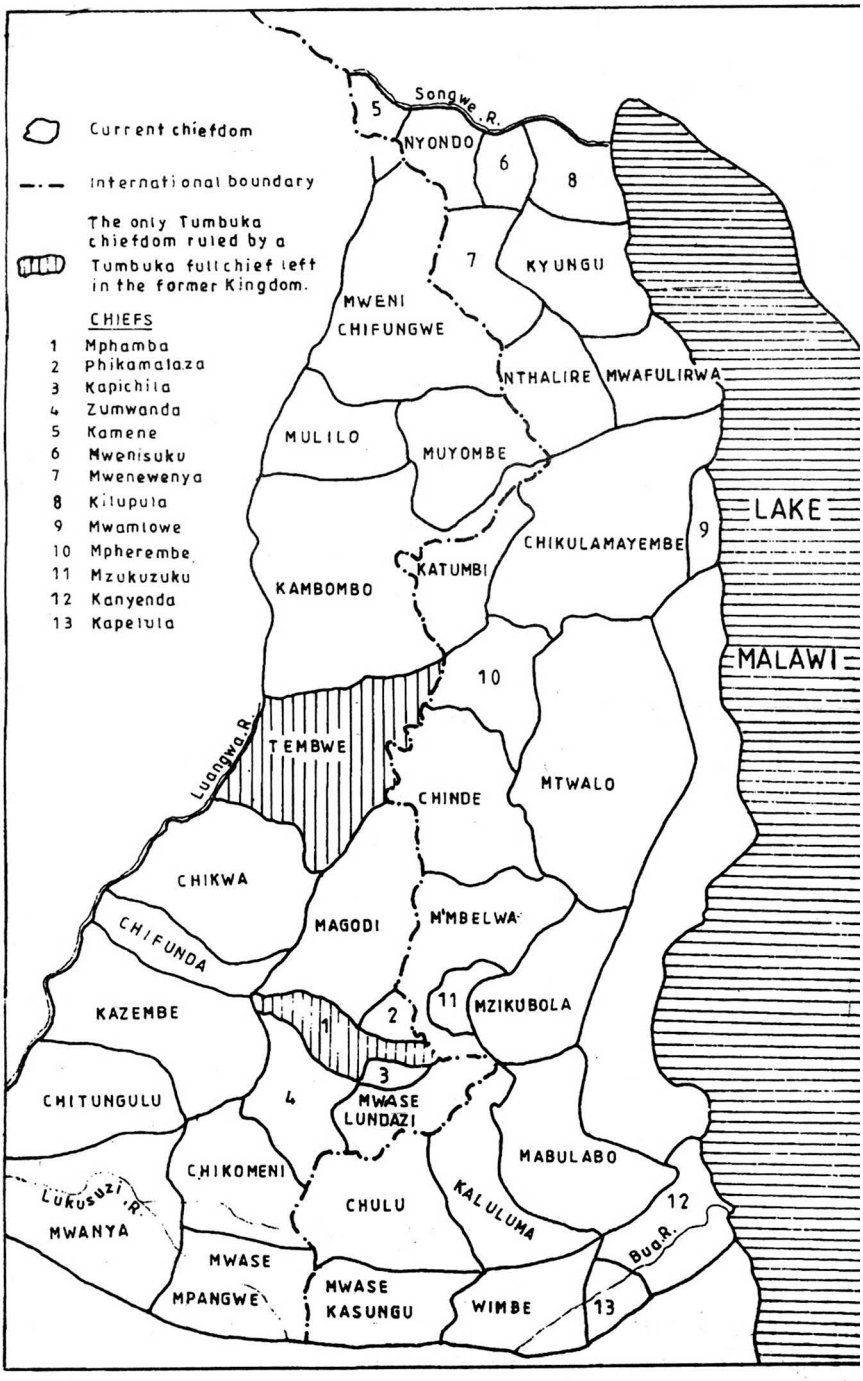
UMBUKA UNDER THE NGONI CHIEFS

The Ngoni passed *through* the Tumbuka territory from the *south* as *one large family*. We are told that the Ngoni were very fierce warriors and are remembered for their inhuman destruction of property and life wherever they passed in M'nyanjagha Kingdom. From the *north*, they came as *fragmented groups*. They entered the M'nyanjagha Kingdom *from* Chief Mowa's territory, where they destroyed properties and killed many people. From there, they descended south down to Bambanda, then Njuyu, which became their first headquarters. After a short time, they left Njuyu and came to settle permanently at Kathibi (Mzimba). They raided the neighbouring and distant areas for cattle, food, young men or boys to be trained as warriors, and they also raided the local people for beautiful women.

The Ngoni found Chief Chiti in control of the territory west of Mzimba. They drove him out of the territory to the area across South Rukuru River. The Ngoni did not stop there. They went up to M'nyanjagha's headquarters at Musumba. They did not find him but thoroughly looted the area. M'nyanjagha had moved to Wombwe (Bombwe), also known as Milulu. The Ngoni summoned M'nyanjagha for a peaceful discussion. When he arrived, the Ngoni took him captive and brought him to Genesi Nzima's village near Kapando. He remained there for two years, and during that time, the Ngoni gave him great respect and frequently called him *gogo*, meaning 'grandfather' in Chi-Ngoni. In the same language, *gogo* also means 'grandmother'. Later, the Ngoni chief allowed M'nyanjagha to continue ruling the area across South Rukuru River.[124] The M'nyanjagha at that time was Sakalale, son of Nyanje. He was a nephew of the previous M'nyanjagha.

---

[124] Ngoni rulers: first is M'mbelwa or Mombera, 1848 to 1891; second is Chimutunga, 1891 to 1924; third is Mukuzo, 1924 to 1927; fourth is Lazaro Chikupizga, 1927 to 1960; fifth . . .



Map 14. Current Chiefdoms in the former Tumbuka Kingdom, 2006

After staying among the local people for some time, and since they came with a few women, they married the local women and their offspring became part of the dominant Tumbuka society. Marrying the local women was an act of *convenience* and was not considered by the Ngoni as a way of *assimilating the local culture* or understanding the indigenous people better. Since the Ngoni were experienced and skilled savage warriors, they quickly and forcibly usurped power from the Tumbuka chiefs in the areas where they settled. Initially, a few Tumbuka accepted their political power willingly, but by using force, terror, and fear, the Ngoni quickly spread their political power over *a large* population of the Tumbuka.

The Ngoni *did not extend* their political power over the *entire* M'nyanjagha Kingdom. There were still *large portions* of the kingdom that had not at all come under the Ngoni rule. This was very true of the western portion of the M'nyanjagha Kingdom, especially Chamanyavyose's territory, which was controlled by the Senga and the one that was nominally under Katumbi Mulindawafwa and Katumbi Limilazamba west of Nkhamanga.

The Ngoni, like the Balowoka, ruled the Tumbuka through a system of indirect rule. That was a system whereby the Ngoni ruled the Tumbuka through the existing traditional political structures. Wherever they reigned, the Ngoni left the Tumbuka local traditional authorities to rule over their people according to their custom and creed. They only collected the young men, who were trained as warriors. This way, the 'Atimbuka (*sic*) [became] the fighting men for the Angoni'.[125] Thus, the grass-roots rulers at village level or, in some cases, at subchief level within the chiefdom were the indigenous people. The appointing authorities were the local people, and the Ngoni rarely rejected such appointments. The system of indirect rule made it difficult for the Ngoni to change the Tumbuka way of life. Additionally, the fact that the Ngoni control did not affect the whole M'nyanjagha Kingdom meant that, in the areas where it was, it had little impact on the Tumbuka traditional administration.

---

[125] Pachai (ed.), 'Ngoni Politics and Diplomacy in Malawi: 1848–1904', in *The Early History of Malawi*, p. 197.

IMPACT OF THE NGONI ON THE TUMBUKA

The Ngoni brought a number of new aspects of culture among the Tumbuka. We have already discussed the changes the Ngoni brought into marriage procedures and how that altered the way marriages were conducted in the post-Ngoni Tumbuka society. They were the ones who, for instance, introduced lobola, the transfer of *cattle*, as one of the marriage payments in the Tumbuka society. The change was quite fundamental in the lives of the Tumbuka society. The lobola system changed not only the locality where the couple lived after marriage but also the ownership of the offspring in the marriage. In the new system, the children were by tradition owned by the husband after paying full lobola. As a result of the new system of marriage, the previously matrilocal Tumbuka *adopted* the Ngoni *patrilocal* marriages. Adopting the Ngoni patrilocal system was a very *prestigious* thing to do by the 'colonised' Tumbuka, and in most cases, it elevated their status in society. They did what the powerful *new rulers* (the 'colonial' power) were doing, and that made the affected to be seen as being much closer to the new rulers. That was an additional impetus for many Tumbuka families to quickly accept the new system and abandon their own matrilocal system in marriage as a way of identifying themselves with the new rulers. Lobola was intensified among the Tumbuka in *1898*, when the centuries' old Tumbuka practice of mtupa claims was stopped by the British administration in the area. This issue has been covered in chapter 6.

It has already been stated that the Ngoni came from Natal, South Africa, where for security reasons they lived in large concentrated villages. That was not the case among the Tumbuka. They lived in small communities scattered over the kingdom. Again, for security reasons, wherever the Ngoni settled in the M'nyanjagha Kingdom, they quickly regrouped the Tumbuka into large villages. They also taught the Tumbuka new ways of making war weapons and new methods of fighting in the wars.

The Ngoni introduced new funeral and burial methods, especially for their kings or notables in society. The day of burial for such people was a very frightening time because as per Ngoni custom, the king must go with other citizens to go and keep him company in the other world. As a result of this, few young people were seen on the day of burial. They

went away to other places or hid in the houses or in the bush until after the burial. But as a custom, many people had to be buried alive together with the body of the king. They included his wives so as to continue the marriage in the other world. They did not want him to go to the other world a bachelor. A few senior men were buried alive with the king to act as his guardians, and a number of other women were also buried alive with him. This tradition was not only practised among the Ngoni but also among the Balowoka and the Senga. Many lives were destroyed in the name of tradition. The Tumbuka never practised this tradition prior to the arrival of the Ngoni and never even adopted it from the Ngoni. Fortunately, this stopped with the arrival of the Christian missionaries. As a result of this, the Ngoni, Senga, and Balowoka in Utumbuka began using live animals to be buried with their dead chiefs. Today, only Ngoni chiefs or notables are still buried in the sitting position; the rest are buried like the Tumbuka, in a sleeping position.

Like the Senga, the Ngoni did not bring many of their women from Natal in Durban. As a result, they married local women wherever they settled. The M'nyanjagha Kingdom being their last settlement, the Ngoni married the local *Tumbuka* women and eventually ended up losing their language because, over the centuries, their children spoke the language of their mothers, Chi-Tumbuka. Ngoni as a language 'was already disappearing in 1919, though fifteen to twenty years earlier it had been widely spoken'.[126] Today, the Chi-Tumbuka language is the *mother tongue* of the Ngoni.[127] The language has a few

---

[126] Monica Wilson, 'Changes in Social Structure in Southern Africa: The Relevance of Kinship Studies to the Historian', in Leonard Thompson (ed.), *African Societies in Southern Africa: Historical Studies* (London: Heinemann, 1969), p. 81.

[127] Surprisingly enough, during our fieldwork in Chief Mperembe, we discovered that at the palace, the members of the royal family or all those at the royal courtyard spoke Chi-Ngoni to each other but spoke Chi-Tumbuka to people not part of the royal courtyard. We were told that was the same at all palaces in the Ngoni chiefdoms. They also told us that there are a few villages in Mzimba where Chi-Ngoni is occasionally used by the Ngoni, though their main language (lingua franca) is Chi-Tumbuka.

Ngoni words in it to remind them that originally the Ngoni came from South Africa. Apart from their distinct names, clearly traceable historical origin, and a few inconsiderable cultural remnants, the Ngoni in the former M'nyanjagha Kingdom are in *most cultural aspects* Tumbuka and will remain like that forever.

For easy identification of the true Ngonis or the Amanguni, the practice of boring their ears was continued wherever they settled. *Bored ears,* was a *national identity mark* for the Ngoni, a symbol of pride for them as the Ngoni as opposed to the non-Ngoni, the local people (in this case, the Tumbuka). Labour migrants from Central Africa (Zambia and Malawi included), who worked in South Africa, told stories of finding people in that country who had bored ears like the Ngoni and who settled in their areas back home. Those were the Amanguni (the Ngoni). The tradition of boring ears by the Ngoni in the Tumbuka Kingdom declined gradually, and by 1950, it had been discarded.[128]

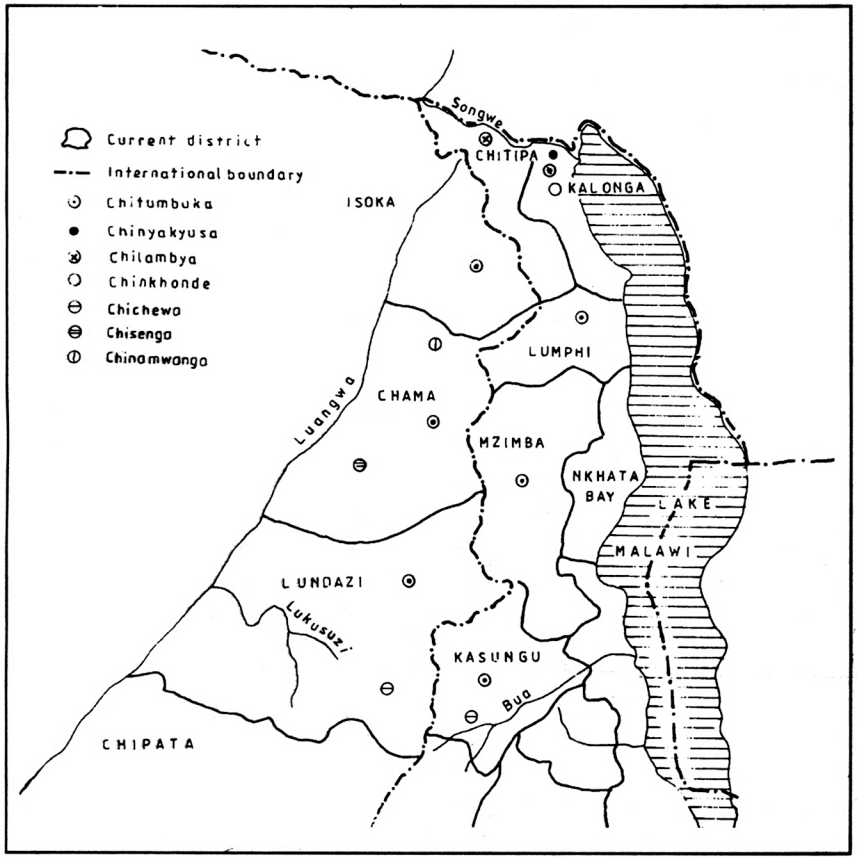
Figure 24: A Ngoni with bored ear

[128] The authors are very grateful to Mr E. Lithuli Chipeta-Mpeta of MMI in Mzimba, Malawi, for telling us the truth about the bored ears of the Ngoni. We apologise for the serious error we made in connection with the issue of bored ears in the first edition.

Another important thing that was a result of the Ngoni rule was the practice by many Tumbuka clans of *abandoning their original Tumbuka names* and adopting the names of the so-called ruling class. Perhaps, in the long run, that was one way of probably raising their clans' status in society. It was also one way of being closer to or associating themselves with the ruling class. Through this system of adopting the Ngoni names, the Tumbuka who practised it were being respected like the genuine Ngoni, a situation many Tumbuka admired. Additionally, there were some indigenous Tumbuka who also bored their ears, again a way of associating themselves with the ruling class, the Ngoni. It was this silly situation that made Young emotionally comment: 'But it is not yet too late and it is to be hoped that the mistaken policy of the old Tumbuka families, who hide their true race [ethnic identity] in the foolish dream of being taken for "Ngoni", may not long delay the appearance among them of a reliable historian.'[129]

The term *nthanganeni* for the institution discussed in the other chapter was introduced in the Tumbuka society by the Ngoni. Thus, while the Tumbuka called the same institution mpala ya basungwana, the Ngoni called it nthanganeni. The Ngoni equivalent of nthanganeni for the boys is called *laweni*. The term *laweni* is, however, not very common among the Tumbuka.

[129] Young, *Notes on the History of the Tumbuka–Kamanga Peoples*, p. 136.



Map 15. Languages in the former Tumbuka Kingdom, 1966

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

THE DECLINE OF THE TUMBUKA KINGDOM

The Tumbuka people occupied vast territory that later in the sixteenth century became difficult to effectively control by the M'nyanjagha. His headquarters was in the centre of the kingdom but far in the north near Lake Kazuni. Frequent links and communication between M'nyanjagha and his Nyanjaghas diminished as years passed by. Rarely did chiefs and their people come together as they used to do frequently before the eighteenth century. By the nineteenth century, they occasionally met mainly during important national events, such as Mabazgo ceremonies, and during royal funerals. This was mainly as a result of political interference by foreigners either as traders or just settlers in the chiefdoms they settled. The affected chiefdoms gradually declared themselves loosely independent of the M'nyanjagha's control.

Since the Tumbuka faced no serious external threat, this became a disadvantage to the kingdom in terms of military strength. They found it unnecessary to have a formidable army to fight peaceful neighbours or peaceful traders from outside their kingdom. As such, when later in the last half of the eighteenth century their territory was being 'invaded' by enemies such as slave traders, they could not mobilise an effective army to block them or expel those that had already settled in their land. The M'nyanjagha also failed to deal with the newcomers who settled in his kingdom and were interfering in the local politics. For instance, the few Senga could have easily been defeated had M'nyanjagha sent an

army to his son Chamanyavyose to assist in chasing the enemy out of the Luangwa Valley. He did not assist his son, and the result was the 'colonisation' of Chamanyavyose's chiefdom by the Biza.

With the fact that the Tumbuka faced no problems with the Saan, whose land they occupied, they also cultivated and developed a culture of peace in their society. That was the reason why they found it difficult to start wars with people who entered their territory peacefully. They welcomed strangers on face value in the same way the Saan 'welcomed' them. As a result of their peaceful nature, the incoming peoples took advantage of their way of life and got part of their kingdom and usurped political power, especially in the border chiefdoms, as stated in the earlier paragraphs. For example, the Balowoka came as peaceful traders who after some time settled among the Tumbuka in the Rumphi region, married the local women from influential families of the Kumwenda and Luhanga, and eventually usurped the political power of the Nyanjaghas in the same area.

The same was true for the Senga on the western side of the kingdom. They came peacefully as people looking for good land in which to settle. They married into the local influential families, including the chief's family. Later, the same Senga interfered in the local politics and undermined the authority of Chief Chamanyavyose. In the end, they usurped his political power and established Senga chiefdoms, replacing those established by Chamanyavyose. On the southern border, the Chewa peacefully pushed northwards into the Tumbuka Kingdom to settle in the present Tumbuka territories under Chewa chiefs Mwase, Zumwanda, and Kapichila.

Although the Bemba invaded the northern part of the kingdom and the Ngoni did the same, by the time this was happening, the kingdom had already collapsed. They just made the bad situation worse in the kingdom.

Ivory and slave trade were important factors that greatly led to the decline of the Tumbuka territory. Strong and productive young men and women were sold as slaves to the Arab and Swahili slave hunters. This led to reduced population and people living in fear, reducing productivity and production in the kingdom.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

THE ARRIVAL OF THE BRITISH MISSIONARIES AND THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT IN THE TUMBUKA KINGDOM

Early Christian missionaries in Africa were the agents of colonialism, and these include those who went to the present Northern Malawi, a part of the Tumbuka Kingdom. The missionaries went there first and prepared the ground for colonialism by pacifying the local people. After all was ready, the missionaries invited their government to declare the area a *protectorate*. The local people did not know or understand the complicated politics leading to the takeover of their land by the British government. However, what the Tumbuka people knew was that the British were the fifth colonisers. The first were the Balowoka, followed by the Bisa (Senga), the Chewa, the Ngoni, and finally, the British.

The Ngoni were very strong militarily and did not want to be protected by anyone. After several years of missionary-style persuasion, the Ngoni finally accepted the British missionaries in their territory. The Ngoni even wanted an exclusive Ngoni–missionary alliance. They did not want the missionaries to build any station in the Tonga land. That was not possible for the missionaries to accept because they came there for *all* the people, *not* only for the Ngoni. The missionaries built their mission stations in Ngoni land and Tonga land and also in the 'buffer zone' between the Ngoni and Tonga territories. The ones built in between the two groups of people acted as a buffer zone to prevent the Ngoni from attacking the Tonga and vice versa.

The early missionaries in the Tumbuka land were all associated with the Free Church of Scotland *mission station*—the *Livingstonia Mission Station*. James Sutherland and William Koyi Mtusane opened the first station at Hoho, near Njuyu hill, in 1882. Elmslie opened a station at Ekwendeni in 1889, while Peter McCallum and Dr Steele set up a mission station at Hora in 1893. Other missionaries who worked in Tumbuka land at the end of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century included the following: James Stewart, Dr Laws, Frederick Moir, Dr Fraser, and T. Cullen Young.

By 1904, the missionaries had a strong hold on the Tumbuka, the Tonga, and the Ngoni. That was the time the missionaries asked their government, Britain, to take over the land occupied by the Tumbuka, the Tonga, and the Ngoni in northern Nyasaland. When taking over this land, Sir Alfred Sharpe, the British commissioner and consul general, had this to say to the Ngoni:

> The authority of the hereditary chiefs would be upheld, they would be able to decide minor disputes among their people, they would receive annual subsidies. The chiefs . . . would get their people to pay tax, to obey the Resident and to follow his advice.[130]

That marked the British entry into the area. Having been told by the missionaries that the land the British government had taken over belonged to the Ngoni and the Tumbuka under the Chikhulamayembe dynasty, the British administrators quickly re-established the Chikhulamayembe chieftaincy from 1907. This was the chieftaincy the Ngoni abolished in 1855 when they killed the seventh reigning Chikhulamayembe. What this meant to the Tumbuka was that the Chikhulamayembe dynasty was back to rule the Tumbuka in the Nkhamanga area. By the turn of the twentieth century, the former Tumbuka Kingdom of the M'nyanjagha was still being ruled by the Senga to the west, the Themba Katumbi Chabinga brothers to the northwest, the Chikhulamayembe in the Nkhamanga in the north, and the Ngoni in the central and southern parts of the territory.

---

[130] Pachai, 'Ngoni Politics and Diplomacy in Malawi: 1848–1904', p. 206.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

ORAL INTERVIEWS

Luhanga, Taida, ninety-two years old, M'nyanjagha Village, Chief Mperembe, Malawi, 15 August 1998.

Bota, Stalin, sixty-nine years old, M'nyajagha Village, Chief Mperembe, Malawi, 19 December 1996.

Bota, Semeon Chizamusoka, sixty-two years old, Bambanda Village, Chief Kambombo, Chama, Zambia.

Mulenga, Guerrea, a citizen of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Yuka Hospital, Kalabo.

Nkholongo, Paul, ninety-three years old, a Sukuma from Tanzania, Mwami Hospital, Chief Mpezeni, Chipata, 20 April 1998.

M'kulama, B., Chaipa Village, Chief Kambombo, Chama, Zambia, 1996.

Chilembo, Robert, fifty-seven years old, Mutuga Village, Chiyunga, Chief Kamombo, Chama, Zambia, 21 December 2001.

Headman Kapalakasya (Mesto Nyimbili), sixty-seven years old, Kapalakasya Village, Chief Muyombe, 1998.

Headman Mweedowoko (Ranwell Vyade Kumweda), head induna for Chief Muyombe, Mweedowoko Village, Chief Muyombe, 1998.

Head Chote, five years old, Chote Village, Chief Kambombo, Chama, Zambia.

Mkandabile, Fracson Zada, fifty years old, Zanda Village between Jalila and Chikwaka Village, Malawi.

Muwowo, Evanson, sixty-nine years old, Mwenezako Village, Chief Muyombe.

Nyirenda, Kadoda, sixty-five years old, Chamaliwa School, Chief Chindi, Mzima, Malawi.

M'hango, Radwick, sixty-six years old, M'yanjagha Village, Chief Mperembe.

Nundwe, Mukota, sixty-five years old, Mujanike Village, Katumbi, Malawi.

Group Headman Kanyerere (Gibson Condoka), Kanyerere Village, Chief Kambombo, Chama, Zambia.

Chirwa, Thapso, fifty-six years old, Rumphi Council Market, Rumphi, Malalwi.

Zgambo, Yafet, ninety-four years old, House Number 149, Kabwata, near SDA Church, Lusaka.

Bota, Oliver, forty-one years old, Kapemba Village, Chief Chikulamayembe, Malawi, 9 November 1999.

Mkandabile, Tennyson, sixty-five years old, PO Box 40, Mperembe, Chief Mperembe, Malawi, 12 December 1998.

Kumwenda, Mutakankwa, fifty-six years old, M'nyanjagha Village, Chief Mperembe, Malawi, 12 December 1998.

Kumwenda, Mutankwa, fifty-six years old, M'nyanjagha Village, Chief Muyombe.

Nyirenda, Evanson, sixty-nine years old, Mwenezako Village, Chief Muyombe.

Nyirenda, Kadoda, sixty-five years old, Chamaliwa School, Chief Chindi, Mzimba, Malawi, 14 December 1998.

Kumwenda, Mutankwa, fifty-six years old, M'nyanjagha Village, Chief Mperembe, Malawi, 11 December 2001.

Chirwa, Sandford, sixty-four years old, Mukopeka Village, Chief Zumwanda, Lundazi, Zambia, 11 December 2001.

Nthala, Patsonm, sixty-seven years old, great-grandson of M'nyanjagha Kaluka, Kaluka Old (Simon) Village, Chief Mperembe, Malawi, 11 December 1998.

Nyongo, Maxon, seventy-two years old, Luvwanga Village, Chiti, Chief Chindi, Malawi, 7 August 1998.

Chavula, S. L. B., second year student, School of Education, University of Zambia, Project Research for the Course RS 202: Indigenous Religions in Central Africa. Field interviews in Chama District, 2000.

BOOKS

Agnew, Swanzie, and Micheal Stubbs (eds.), *Malawi in Maps* (London: University of London Press, 1972).

Anonymous, 'The Tumbuka Tribe', *Aurora*, 5/1 (1901), 2–3.

Brelsford, W. V., *The Tribes of Zambia* (Lusaka: Government Printer, 1956).

Brown, Dee, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee: An Indian History of the American West* (New York: Bantam Books, 1972).

Coxhead, J. C. C. *The Native Tribes of North-Eastern Rhodesia (Occasional Paper of the Royal Anthropological Institute)* (London: RAI, 1914).

Carneiro, R. L., 'A Theory of the Origin of the State', *Science*, vol. 169 (21 August 1970).

Chondoka, Y. A., *Traditional Marriages in Zambia: A Study in Cultural History* (Ndola: The Mission Press, 1989).

Macmillan, H. W., 'Notes on the Origins of the Arab War' in B. Pachai (ed.), *The Early History of Malawi* (London: Longman, 1972).

Fraser, Donald, *Winning a Primitive People: Sixteen Years' Work among the Warlike Tribe of the Ngoni and the Senga and Tumbuka People of Central Africa* (London: Olyphant Anderson and Ferrier, 1914).

Longwe, W. K., 'Impact of Ngoni Raids on the Tonga in the Late Nineteenth Century', History Seminar 1984/85, Paper No. 10, Department of History, Chancellor College, University of Malawi.

Langworthy, H., *Zambia before 1890: Aspects of Pre-Colonial History* (London: Longman, 1972).

Mukuka, P. M., National Archives of Zambia, *Calendars of the District Notebooks (Northern Province 1862–1963)*, vol. 2 (Lusaka: Government Printer, 1966).

Macpherson, Fergus, Seminar–Workshop on Oral Records of Local History held at Lundazi, 24–25 June 1972 (Lusaka: Kenneth Kaunda Foundation, 1973).

National Archives of Zambia. NAZ/Sec 2/320 Amalgamation of the Senga Tribe.

Nyirenda, S., 'History of the Tumbuka–Henga People', *Bantu Studies*, 5/1 (10300).

Owner-Cooper, J., *The Zulu Aftermath* (London: Heinemann, Longman, 1968).

Pachai, B. (ed.), *The Early History of Malawi* (London: Longman, 1972).

Chibambo, Y. M., *My Ngoni of Nyasaland* (London: United Society for Christian Literature, n.d. 1932), translated by Rev. Charles Stuart.

Roberts, A. D., *History of the Bemba: Political Growth and Change in North-Eastern Zambia before 1900* (London: Longman, 1973).

Tew, Mary, *Peoples of the Lake Nyasa Region* (London: Longman, 1950).

Thompson, L. (ed.), *African Societies in Southern Africa: History Studies* (London: Heinemann, 1969).

Tiberondwa, A. K., *Missionary Teachers as Agents of Colonialism: A Study of Their Activities in Uganda, 1877–1925* (Lusaka: National Educational Company of Zambia, 1978).

Vail, H. L. 'Suggestions towards a Reinterpreted Tumbuka History', in B. Pachai (ed.), *The Early History of Malawi* (London: Longman, 1972).

Wilson, Monica, 'Reflections on the Early History of North Malawi', in B. Pachai (ed.), *The Early History of Malalwi* (London: Longman, 1972).

Wilson, G., *The Constitution of the Ngonde (Rhodes–Livingstone Papers, No. 3*) (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1939).

Wilson, Monica, *The Peoples of the Nyasa–Tanganyika Corridor* (Cape Town: Longman, 1958).

Wilson, Monica, 'Changes in Social Structure in Southern Africa: The Relevance of Kinship Studies to the Historian', in Leonard Thompson (ed.), *African Societies in Southern Africa: Historical Studies* (London: Heinemann, 1969).

Young, T. C., 'The "Wa-Henga" of Northern Nyasaland,' *Journal of the African Society*, vol. xxiii (1923–24).

Young, Thomas Cullen, *Notes on the History of the Tumbuka–Kamanga Peoples in the Northern Province of Nyasaland* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1932).

Young, T. C., *Notes on the Customs and Folk-lore of the Tumbuka–Kamanga People* (Livingstonia: The Mission Press, 1931).

Zambia Journal of History, 1/9 (2004), 72–80.

INDEX

A

Africa 2-3, 185, 261
agriculture 35, 90, 92, 94, 97
  chitemene system 94
  nyata system 94-5, 206
Alifeyo (M'nyanjagha) 55
Amanguni 256
ammunitions 107-8, 189, 191
Among the Wild Ngoni (Elmslie) 3-4
ancestors 12, 67, 169, 184-5, 227, 231, 233
Arabs 94, 104, 107-8, 188, 190-2
Aurora 4, 265

B

bachimbwi 178
bad omen 63, 161, 163, 247
Bakafula (Saan) 11-12, 51
Balowoka iii, xxvii-xxviii, 4-5, 8-12, 108, 110-11, 128-9, 132-4, 198-201, 203-5, 209, 215-22, 241-2, 255, 260-1
  chiefs of 216
Balowoka rule 215-16, 222
Bamantha (son of Bwati the First) 214-15
bangles 80, 105, 115, 189, 220
  ankle 100, 105, 108
  copper 105-6, 108, 189
  iron 105
Banthali (Munthali) xxiii, 30, 250
Bantu Studies 5, 267
barkcloth 100-2, 105, 107, 131-2, 161, 163, 177
bavyaka 42, 49, 205, 229
bazamba 115-16, 125, 130-3, 148-50, 160-1, 164
bazukulu 177-9
beads 44, 47, 107-8, 113, 115, 125, 138, 161, 189
beer xxxii, 116, 137-8, 149-50, 158, 179-80
Bemba xxiv, xxvii, xxxi-xxxii, 10, 15, 76, 89, 94, 104-5, 107, 170-2, 214-15, 225, 244, 248-9
  kingdom of 189
  languages of 170, 172
Bisa (Biza) xxvii, xxix, xxxi-xxxii, 15, 65, 76, 104-7, 170-2, 189, 225-8, 230, 233-4, 236, 241, 260-1

blood, fresh 170, 172
bored ears xiii, 256
Bota, Kanabeza Musolomoka 65-6, 236-7
Bota, Lifted 208
Bota, Musolomoka Mutayachalo 65-6, 228, 232, 235-7
Bota, Oliver xii, 200
Bota, Stalin 24, 55-6, 263
Bota, Sukusuku John 208
Bota, Thandamalaga 208
Bota, Zuwula 208
Brelsford, W. V. 21, 224, 265
Britain 262
British colonial administration 5, 9-10, 13
British government xxvii, 6, 12-13, 192, 222, 236, 250, 261-2
British South Africa Company (BSAC) 68, 250
Bua River xxvi, 23, 27, 52, 54, 68, 89, 194-5, 214
burial xxxi, 33, 45, 126-7, 175, 177-8, 254-5
Bwati the First (Chayeka) 211, 213-15
Bwati the Second (son of Chayeka) 213-14

C

calico 101, 107-8, 189, 191
cattle 11, 94, 102, 105-6, 127-9, 135-6, 141, 158, 189, 214, 244, 251
  red 244-5, 247
Chakola (mother of Longwe II) 60, 66
Chama District xxviii, 10, 27, 29, 33, 42, 47, 61, 86, 197, 225, 236, 241-2, 265
Chamanyavyose (Chama) xxii, xxvii, 14, 26, 29-30, 33, 47, 55, 59, 61-5, 75, 79-80, 86, 228-33, 235-7
Chamanyavyose (chief) xxii, xxvii, xxxi, 14, 29-30, 33, 61-6, 70, 75, 79-80, 86, 228-33, 235-7, 242, 260
Chanangika (M'nyanjagha) 55-6, 59-60, 221
Chasefu Mission Station 84
Chewa iii, xi, xxiv-xxvi, xxviii, xxxi-xxxii, 10, 22-3, 68-9, 104, 106-7, 171, 194-7, 214, 244, 260-1
  chiefs of 22, 196-7
  subchiefs of 195
Chi-Luba 23, 40-1
Chi-Ngoni 251, 255
Chi-Tumbuka xv, xvii, xxxi-xxxii, 5, 18, 21, 23, 40-1, 54, 76, 166, 209-11, 225-6, 241, 255
Chibanga (Tanzanian commissioner) 18
Chibanjala I (M'nyanjagha) 55, 59-60, 87
Chibeza (Bisa leader) 225-35, 237, 239, 242
  village of 230-1, 235
Chihomaniche (chief) 55-7, 59, 86
chijula mulomo 113-14, 129, 135
Chikhale (wife of Kaluka Luwewe) 59-60
chikhole 122, 135, 141
Chikulamayembe (Chikhulamayembe) chieftaincy 4-13, 61, 189, 198-201, 208-11, 213-16, 218, 221-2, 250, 262, 264
Chikunda 104, 107-8, 187
chikweta 167-8

childbirth 17, 19, 25, 35, 70, 72, 127, 145-6, 160-1, 164-6, 217, 230, 244
  illegitimate 160, 164
  ominous 160, 164
chilyelano 155
chimalo 113, 119-20, 123, 129, 131, 135
Chimundavwa (nephew of Kampungu) 212-13
Chimunyila (M'nyanjagha) 55-6
Chiti (chief) 17, 25-6, 29, 32-3, 38-9, 55, 64, 82-4, 86, 166, 190, 235, 251, 265
Chitimukulu Chileshe Chipele (Bemba leader) xxvii, 214
chitivili 167-8
Chitukula (M'nyanjagha) 33, 55, 60, 87
Chiuta (Tumbuka god) 182
chivumbi 177, 179
Chiyunga (chief) xii, 17, 33, 38, 55, 57, 64, 80, 82, 85-7, 166, 226, 235, 263
chondo (*mkocho*) 118, 125-6, 167-8
Chondoka, Yizenge iii-iv, x, xii, xx, xxii, xxiv, xxvi, xxviii, xxx, xxxii, 2, 4, 8, 10, 12
Christianity (Ekeleziya) 185
coffin 177-8
colonial government 6, 69, 242
Colonialism 7, 10, 200-1, 214-15, 218, 261, 267
coup d'état 212, 229, 233

D

dances 118, 125-6, 132, 148, 151-2, 167-9, 172-3, 180
  disease-triggered 168-9
death xxii, 20, 22, 35, 45-7, 71, 126-7, 166, 175-7, 179, 182, 194, 199, 215-16, 233-4
Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) xvii, xxx, 14, 18, 97, 106, 263
diseases 59, 168-73, 176, 183-4
  spiritual 169, 171-3
Dokowe, Baza 13, 68, 166, 195
drums 35, 40, 46-7, 102, 126, 149, 169-70
  funeral 40, 46-7, 166
  specialists of 170

E

education 35, 157, 159, 162, 265
  traditional 35, 157, 162
elephant tusks 39-40, 64, 77, 228
Elmslie, Walter Angus 3-6, 262

F

famine 59, 88, 90, 95, 165, 183, 186-7
Feira (Luangwa) 187, 243
fly switch 39, 96
Fraser, Donald 5-6, 262, 266
Free Church of Scotland 262
fumu za pasi 151, 169-72
  spirits of 170-1

G

gogo house 134, 136, 140
Gonapamuhanya (Mlowoka chief) 208-13, 218
Gondwe, Walter 216
gongwe xiii, 64, 95
Gonthaminga (M'nyanjagha) 55
graveyard 47, 127, 177-80, 231,

241, 247
gule wa sembe 180
guns 101, 107-8, 189, 191, 220
Gwamba (M'nyanjagha) 55
Gwaza Jere (senior induna of Zwangendaba) 247-8

H

Henga Valley 25, 248, 250
history ix-x, xix, xxiii-xxv, xxvii-xxxi, 1-11, 13-15, 17, 19, 21-5, 54-5, 158-9, 195-6, 209-10, 213-15, 265-8
  authentic 6-7
  official 4, 6-7, 13
History of the Tumbuka and Senga in Chama District: Chiefdoms without a Kingdom, 1470–1900 (Chondoka) xxviii
hoes xxi, 48, 96, 100, 105, 113, 129, 145, 158, 209-10
Homani Bantu 44, 208
hunters 42-3, 85, 95, 184, 191, 205
hunting 51, 62, 85-6, 92, 95

I

impotence 26, 30, 61, 156-7, 230
indhlunkulu 137-9
indirect rule 6, 196, 215-16, 239, 253
induna 42, 138, 247, 249, 264
Islam 188
ivory 77, 90, 98, 104, 107-8, 189-91, 201, 204, 220, 260

J

Jalila (chief) 25, 29, 31, 33, 38, 51, 55, 64, 80-1, 86, 166, 235, 264

K

Kadono (chief) 27, 70-1
Kajumba (son of Chidundu) 64, 72-3, 189
Kakalala Chisalanda Mlowoka (Balowoka leader) 199-201, 203-4, 206, 212, 217-18, 221
Kalonga District xxv-xxvi, xxix, 10, 14, 18-24, 41, 67-8, 77, 88, 178, 194, 214, 250
Kalonga wa Nkhonde (son of Mulonga Mbulalubilo) xxv, 21, 24
Kalonga wa Songwe (son of Mulonga Mbulalubilo) xxiii-xxiv, 19-24, 54, 68, 88
Kaluka (M'nyanjagha) 245, 265
Kaluka Nthala Luwewe (M'nyanjagha) xii, 55-6, 59-60, 245, 265
Kambombo 14, 225, 234, 237, 242
Kambombo (chief) xii, 17, 24, 61, 78, 226, 236, 263-4
Kampungu (nephew of Gonapamuhanya) 211-14, 219
kamuchoma 167
Kanyerere (headman) 61, 75, 77-8, 86, 264
Kapemba (chief) xii, 32-3, 38-9, 41-5, 47-9, 51, 63-4, 85-6,

166, 200, 205, 207-8, 231, 235, 264
Kapole (chief) 29, 32, 38-9, 45-6, 56-7, 59-60, 85
Kapungu (chief) 204-7, 242
Karonga (Chewa leader) 19-20, 22-3, 188, 194-6, 214
kingdom of 194-5, 214
Kasolwe (grandchild of Musolomoka Mutayachalo Bota) 79-80, 230-4
Kasungu District 54, 68, 195-6
Kathibi (Mzimba) 10, 27, 31, 51, 57, 84, 189, 251
Katongomala (chief) 33, 59, 64, 79-80, 83, 85-6, 166, 190, 235
Katongomala Pa Katungambizi (chief) 79-80
Katumbikika (M'nyanjagha) 55, 85, 87
Katungambizi I (son of Mukamanga) xiii, 13, 25, 27-8, 55, 68, 80
Katungambizi II (M'nyanjagha) 13
kavuba (*tuvuba*) 182-4, 227-8, 231
Kayazga Ntambwe (son of Kalonga wa Songwe) 23-5, 54, 68
Kazanduka (M'nyanjagha) xxvi, 25, 29, 31-2, 36, 42-4, 51-2, 55-6, 60, 68, 85, 89

L

Lake Kazuni 30-1, 245, 249, 259
Lake Malawi 9, 19, 22, 59, 87, 89, 92, 108, 188-9, 194-5, 198, 201, 216-18, 234
Laws, Robert 262
Livingstone, David 63, 192
Livingstone Mountains 25
Livingstonia Mission 3-5, 7, 9-10, 13, 262
lobola 127-8, 136, 254
London xxx, 5-8, 15, 19, 69, 101, 210, 214, 248, 255, 265-8
Longwe (chief) xx, xxvi, xxxi, 25, 28-31, 36, 48, 51, 56, 61, 68, 80, 83-4, 89, 249
Longwe I (M'nyanjagha) xi, xx, xxvi, xxxi, 25, 28-32, 36, 48-9, 51, 55-6, 60-1, 83-4, 89, 221-2, 249
Longwe II, (M'nyanjagha) 55, 60-1, 221-2
Lozi 10
Lualaba River 15, 17
Luangwa River 49, 51, 54, 63-4, 76, 89, 91-2, 225, 234, 241, 243, 245
Luangwa Valley 29, 51, 62, 64-5, 72, 79, 90, 98, 102-3, 106, 189, 225-6, 234, 239, 241
Luapula River 225
Luba Kingdom x-xi, xxii, xxv-xxvi, xxx, 12, 14-15, 17-18, 23, 36, 56, 67, 88, 166, 178, 233-4
Luba–Lunda Empire 14
Lugard, Frederick 6
Luhanga, Mubila 200, 204, 218, 221
luselo 146, 179
luvili, feathers of 39
Luwanda 247-8
Luwumbu River 49, 76, 91, 206

M

Mabazgo xiii, 35, 56, 166-7
Machona: Returned Labour Migrants and Rural Transformation in Chama District, Northeastern Zambia, 1890–1964 (Chondoka) xxviii
Magodi (chief) 67, 249
magomba 167-8
Malawi xxviii-xxxii, 7-10, 19, 21-4, 57, 67-8, 80-2, 85-7, 89, 188-9, 194-5, 198, 200-1, 215-18, 261-7
Malikiti (son of Katumbikika) 85-7
malipenga 152, 167
Manthepa River 49, 70, 72-3
Mapupo xxvii, 244, 247
marriage xiii, xxxi, 59-60, 105, 110-13, 115-16, 118-29, 131-4, 139, 141-2, 147, 151-4, 156, 222, 254-5
  parents' choice 110
  personal choice 37-8, 110-11, 121, 124, 128, 134, 153
  traditional 105, 151, 154, 222
marriage arrangements 111, 114, 123, 129, 131, 134, 136, 141, 254
marriage celebrations 131
marriage customs 129, 133-4
marriage dances 118, 125-6, 147
marriage payments 105, 111, 113, 119, 124, 127-8, 141-2, 254
  full 113, 127
  main 113, 135-6
marriage proposal 111-12, 122-3, 129, 152-3
mata pa jani (*mata pa thepo*) xii, 35, 45-6
Mbande Hill 19
mbeleka 118, 125-6, 167-8
mbiliya 119, 141
Mbuluko (chief) 25, 29, 32, 43-4
McCallum, Peter 262
mdulo 145, 147-8, 151, 176
mdulo wa mapinga 145-6
medicine 39, 98-9, 132, 145-8, 151, 156, 161, 163-5, 169-74, 179, 247
menstrual periods 147-8
messenger 29, 45-7, 116, 190, 230
metal xx, 100
metalsmiths 100, 158
Mfecane 243
Mfune, Dakamuleke xxx-xxxi
millet meal 105, 108, 117, 180
mining 92, 99
missionaries 1-5, 7-10, 12-13, 199, 204, 221, 255, 261-2
Mitawata (M'nyanjagha) 55, 57, 85-6
mkocho 118, 125-6, 167-8
Mlowoka (chief) xxv, 4-5, 8-9, 11, 13, 71, 198-201, 203-4, 206, 208-14, 216-19, 221, 239, 242, 250
M'nyanjagha:
  first xxvi, 25, 29, 31, 33, 36, 48, 51, 55, 61, 80, 84, 89
  next 33, 37-8, 221
  second 25, 31-2, 42, 51, 55, 89
  village of 29, 39-40, 59, 84
Moir, Frederick 262
Mombera (paramount chief of the Ngoni) 73, 244, 248-9, 251
Mowa (chief) xxx-xxxi, 27, 64, 70-6, 200
Mperembe (chief) 17, 24, 85, 244-5, 248-50, 255, 263-5
Mpezeni (chief) 17, 247-9, 263
mphala 144, 154-6, 158-9, 163

Mphamba (chief) xxvi, 23, 54, 63, 67-9, 195, 197, 249-50
mtupa claim 119, 126-8, 133, 142, 254
Mtusane, William Koyi 262
Mudala (group leader from Luba Kingdom) xi, xxvi, 15, 17-18
Mukamanga (son of Kayazga Ntambwe) 24-5, 27-8, 31, 54, 59, 68, 70, 75
  sons of 28, 70
mukamwana 120, 132
mukweni 120, 132
Mulenga, Guerren x, 18
Mulindawafwa (chief) 204-7, 214, 221, 239, 242, 253
Mulolwa (daughter of Musolomoka Mutayachalo Bota) 65, 229-30, 237
Mulonga Mbulalubilo Muluba (founder) xix, xxiv-xxvi, 14, 17-23, 54, 56, 67, 194, 250
  death of 20
Munene (mother of Mombera) 244, 248
Musiwila (M'nyanjagha) 55
mutemi 15, 18, 22
Mutimbula (chief) xxi, 25, 27, 30, 200, 203, 211
Mutumbuka (brother of Longwe I) xx, 25, 30
muvuba 170, 172
Muyombe (chief) xiii, 62, 77-8, 99, 152, 215, 221, 245, 263-5
Mwakyusa xxiii-xxiv, 14-15
mwali 124, 149-52, 230
mwavi 59, 143-5
mwavi wa khuni 143-4
mwavi wa maji 143-4
Mwembe (son of Gonapamuhanya) 211, 213-14
Mwenedowoko (headman) 75-8
Mzimba xii, 27, 31, 42, 51, 57, 67, 84, 91, 152, 189, 195, 248, 250-1, 255

N

Namwanga xxiv, xxxii, 107, 111
Nchuka (subchief) 62, 64, 72, 77-8, 86, 206, 242
ng'anga 42, 98, 179, 183
Ngoni xxiv-xxv, xxxii, 3-5, 8-9, 11-13, 60, 68-9, 124-9, 132-4, 148, 215, 243-5, 247-51, 253-7, 260-2
  chiefs of 12, 69, 197, 249-51, 255
  impis of 12, 195, 215, 244
Ngoni invasion 8, 11, 249, 266
Ngoni rule 68, 195, 253, 256
Nkhamanga xxx, 5, 27, 67-8, 128-9, 189, 198-201, 203-6, 211-13, 215, 221, 242, 248, 250, 262
Nkhonde (Nkonde) 19-21, 25, 94, 104, 107, 111, 215, 244
nkhoswe 134-5
Nkonjela, Kampungu 211
Notes on the Customs and Folk-lore of the Tumbuka–Kamanga Peoples (Young) 6, 122, 128, 142, 175, 268
Nsenga 187, 244
nthanganeni 148, 151-3, 257
Nthara, Patson xii, 72, 245, 249
Nyanjaghas 11, 23, 28-32, 36, 44, 46, 54, 56-7, 65-6, 84, 166, 200, 219, 259-60
Nyasaland 5, 86, 239
nyau culture 197
Nyika Plateau 62, 248, 250

O

oral source xxviii, 15, 21, 88, 90
oral traditions xxii, 3, 10, 12, 17, 20-3, 25, 31, 44, 51, 75, 88-9, 95, 199-200, 208-12

P

payments, redemptive 128, 141-2
Phalalanjati 49, 73
Pikamalaza (induna of Mombera) 249-50
Pinder, Richard 1
Pitamkusa (son of Gonapamuhanya) 211-13
plural of respect xxxi
political power 9-10, 36-7, 69, 77, 133, 197, 199, 203-4, 211-13, 216-19, 221-2, 233-5, 239, 253, 260
polygamy 30, 111, 157, 161
Portuguese 63, 104, 107-8, 187, 191

R

regalia, chief's 64, 74-6, 219, 232
religion 182-3, 188
relish 125, 146-7, 155-6, 162-3, 165
ruling class 2-3, 207, 227, 257
Rumphi District 90

S

Sakalale (M'nyanjagha) 55, 60, 251
salt 103-6, 146-8, 161, 163
  rock 103, 105
  sea 107-8, 201
salt-making xiii, 103
seasons 97, 174
  dry 103, 206
  rainy 91, 94, 97, 206
Senga xxiv-xxv, xxviii, xxxi-xxxii, 5, 15, 47-8, 65-6, 105-6, 197, 226-37, 239, 241-2, 255, 259-62, 266
  chiefs of 234-6, 239
Sharpe, Alfred 262
slave markets 187
slave trade 108, 186-8, 190, 192, 260
slave traders 187, 191-2, 220, 259
  Arabs 188-91
  Portuguese 191
  Swahili 192
slavery 108, 186-7
  abolishment of 127, 192
slaves xiii, 90, 104, 107-8, 186-92, 260
  domestic 186-8, 190
society:
  matrilineal 32, 35-7, 120, 128, 133, 160, 233
  patrilineal 128
Songwe River 19, 24, 54, 81, 89
South Africa 243, 254, 256
South Rukuru (Lukulu) River 32, 60, 81-3, 248-9, 251
spirits 76, 168-71, 180, 182-5, 192, 227, 231
spit-praying 175, 182, 184
Steele (missionary) 262
Stewart, James 262
Sutherland, James 262
Swahili 104, 107-8, 188, 191
system:
  indirect rule 215-16, 239, 253
  matrilocal 132
  patrilineal 36-7, 120, 133, 213, 218-19, 234

T

taboos 64, 147-8, 150, 160-1, 173, 179
Tanzania xii, xvii, xxiii, xxvi, 14-15, 17-19, 21, 30, 67, 89, 94, 198, 218, 245, 247
Tengayumo Ndhlovu (Chief Magodi) 67, 69, 84, 249-50
thale 99-100
Thambalika (M'nyanjagha) 55, 79, 82-3
Themba Mountain 206-7
thenga 111-13, 129-30, 134, 153
tobacco 105-7
Tonga (Lakeshore Tonga) xxiv, xxxii, 8, 12, 22, 81, 89, 104, 106-7, 111, 126, 187, 203, 212, 261-2
trade xx, 4, 11, 90, 98, 104, 106, 108, 168, 190-2, 198, 201, 203, 209, 216
  items of 108, 190, 209, 220
  local 104-6
  long-distance xiii, 104, 107-8, 198-9, 201, 204, 210, 216-17
  regional 97, 102, 104-6, 108
  silent 105
traditional ceremony xiii, 35, 47, 56
Traditional Marriages in Zambia (Chondoka) 142, 266
tributes 42, 49, 56, 77-8, 89, 210, 229, 241
tuberculosis 145
Tumbuka xix-1, 3-15, 17-25, 27-33, 67-71, 83-92, 94-108, 119-29, 166-72, 181-92, 194-201, 208-22, 224-7, 232-7, 253-7
  chiefs of 12-13, 28, 31, 36, 49, 61, 65, 67-8, 77, 83, 87, 89, 104, 191-2, 249-50
  clans of xxiii-xxiv, 37, 128, 195, 219, 222, 256
  culture of xxxi, 154, 168
  history of xxvi, 3-5, 7-9, 11-13
  native 5, 68, 199-200, 203, 217, 226-7, 249, 257
  territories of xxv-xxvi, xxx, xxxii, 6, 9, 23, 28, 69, 91-2, 99, 192, 216-17, 239, 248-51, 260
  tradition of 37, 71, 86, 232
Tumbuka elders xxviii, xxxi, 12-14, 188
Tumbuka families xix, xxx, 125, 212, 254, 257
Tumbuka Kingdom xi-xiii, xxvi-xxvii, 8-9, 11-12, 28-9, 54, 56-7, 68, 88-91, 188-9, 194-9, 216-17, 248-51, 253-6, 259-62
  disintegrated xxvii
  early xi, xxix, xxxi, 28, 51, 195
Tumbuka Names xv, xix, xxv, xxx, 70, 222, 256
Tumbuka royalty xx
Tumbuka society xxiv, 3, 31, 37, 49, 96, 101, 127, 145, 157-8, 168, 170-2, 189-91, 217, 253-4
  ancient 123
  modern 124
  traditional 42, 115, 186
'The Tumbuka Tribe' (Anonymous) 4, 265

U

ulembe (arrow poison) 98, 105-7
ulumba 167-8
Undi (chief) 69, 126, 176, 194-6, 225

University of Malawi 7, 10, 200, 266
Utumbuka (Tumbuka land) 9, 11-12, 23, 91, 103, 124, 134, 169, 189, 196, 198-9, 203, 227, 236, 262
uzamba ceremony 147, 150
uzamba dance 121, 126, 131, 147-50, 163, 167
uzamba house 131, 147-50

V

Vail, H. Leroy 8, 13, 67, 199, 204, 218, 267
verification process group (VPG) 37-8
vilombo 152, 167, 169, 171
vimbuza xiii, 151, 167, 169, 172-4
  spirits of 172-4
vyanusi 151, 169, 171-2

W

Wajontha (M'nyanjagha) 13, 55-6, 222
wars 11, 49, 89, 152, 187, 192, 222, 242, 254
widows 71, 124, 180-1
wildebeest 39, 80, 96
Winning a Primitive People (Fraser) 5, 266
witchcraft 110, 143, 152, 177, 232
Wombwe (M'nyanjagha) 33, 35, 55-7, 86-7, 251

Y

Young, T. Cullen xix, 5-7, 15, 21, 54, 63, 110, 122, 128, 195-6, 209-10, 215, 257, 262, 268

Z

Zambia ix-x, xii-xiii, xxviii, xxxii-2, 5, 10, 14-15, 17-18, 21-3, 61-3, 67-9, 72, 85-6, 187, 263-8
Zelu Zamala (son of Kanabeza Musolomoka Bota) 237
Zwangendaba Jere (Ngoni leader) xxiv, 243-5, 247